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Faith news

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A national Christian scheme to help troubled clubbers and drinkers was launched last night in Portsmouth. Street pastors work in partnership with local police to mediate in brawls and help those in emotional turmoil.

In Los Angeles, an evangelical minister has been appointed to lead a city-wide programme to combat gang violence. The Rev Jeff Carr said: "We can't arrest our way out of this problem. We have got to figure out how to provide opportunities to communities who have been bypassed for years."

A lesbian rabbi is to be a grand marshal at the New York City Gay Pride parade this Sunday. Sharon Kleinbaum, the senior rabbi of the Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, said she was "very proud that religion will be leading the march this year".

In Russia, the Orthodox Church is said to be planning to make Boris Yeltsin a saint. According to the Russian daily *Tvoy Dien*, the Church's move to canonise the former President is linked to President Putin's plan for a national network of Yeltsin libraries.

Art work by Holocaust victims is to go on display in 2009 at the Dresden State Art Collections. Many of the paintings on loan from Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel are by Jews who did not survive the Holocaust.

An Ofsted report claims that religious education in UK schools fails to highlight "the changing political and social significance" of religion in the modern world.

"As a result, the full potential of the subject to contribute to community cohesion, education for diversity and citizenship is not being realised," says the 43-page report "Making sense of religion".

A group for former Muslims opposed to Islam being involved in public life has been launched in London. Maryam Namazie, a member of the Council of Ex Muslims, said: "We are quite certain we represent a majority in Europe and a vast secular and humanist protest movement in countries like Iran. People can have their beliefs but they must be kept in the private sphere."

The head of the World Council of Churches has called for a peaceful end to the conflict in the Holy Land. The Rev Dr Samuel Kobia said: "Injustice is deeply rooted in the land we call holy. Now new injustices have made the region a battlefield as well."

The General Synod is to debate the rules on the rights of couples to marry in parish churches when they do not live in the area. Until now, couples have had to apply for a special licence to marry in a parish where they are not resident or listed on the church electoral roll.