



Dorset Humanists
Chairman's Letter
November 2009



I was delighted to meet up with the Reverend Catherine Dearlove at the Dorset Equality Conference in Kingston Maurward last month. Reverend Dearlove runs the River of Life Metropolitan Community Church in Dorchester and has invited me to an interfaith event on 21st November to run a workshop on Humanism and to explore common ground with other belief traditions. MCC churches have specific outreach to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender families and communities. Please come and support me if you live in West Dorset. On the other side of the coin, I am less happy about such events as 'Nine Lessons and Carols for Godless People' at the Hammersmith Apollo in December, sponsored by the Rationalist Association, which sounds like a silly parody of Christian worship. It's difficult to be taken seriously as partners in equality and diversity forums when the public face of Humanism is seen to be provocative rather than constructive. That's not to say that Humanists should refrain from critical discussion of religious beliefs. Nearly 50 people turned up to my *Alpha Course Exposed!* talk on a wet night in Wareham, including a good sprinkling of Christians. We had a vigorous debate about evangelical Christianity and Humanism without any animosity or bad feeling. Admittedly, my next talk in New Milton is called 'Godless Morality' but I nicked that title from a book by Richard Holloway, former Bishop of Edinburgh.

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Italians have been outraged at the European Court of Human Rights ruling that crucifixes should not hang in school classrooms. One government minister was quoted as saying: "The European court has trodden on our rights, our culture, our history, our traditions and our values". I have heard similar complaints many times in diversity training sessions when people say that they are 'no longer allowed to be British'. This is piffle and nonsense. Multiculturalism doesn't stop people from being Italian, or British, or whatever. It just prevents one culture from assuming a dominant position, especially when its demographic base is shrinking.

David Warden