

Colorado's gay cake case

The Episcopal Church USA (TEC) is often regarded as a byword among the nations for liberal theology and a 'progressive' agenda on social questions. Eutyclus notices that its Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has joined with other religious leaders in signing an amicus brief supporting the Colorado Civil Rights Commission in the case that concerns a baker who declined to make a celebration cake for a same-sex wedding and was prosecuted. This is part of the duty of the church to 'speak God's word to the church and the world', Curry explains. *TEC Office of Public Affairs* 31 October 2017 bit.ly/2z6uZS4

Amos still speaks

Amos the prophet spoke out against allowing the rich to grow richer while the poor grew poorer. His analysis can be applied to healthcare provision today. A Nuffield Trust report identifies a 'consistent gap', a 'shocking' north-south divide between the dental health of the rich and poor. People from deprived backgrounds are twice as likely to be admitted to hospital needing dental work as the better off. John Appleby of the Nuffield Trust said it is 'shocking that your income or where you live can still determine your dental health'. *Guardian* 31 October 2017 bit.ly/2zdxuo0

Abortion clinics: 'conveyor-belt culture'

It's an axiom of hard-headed business: cash flow is everything - even for abortion providers. Marie Stopes, one of the country's largest abortion providers, has been accused of paying bonuses to staff who encourage women to have procedures. The allegations came to light following a report by the official watchdog, the Care Quality Commission. It is alleged that management 'encouraged' staff to ensure women went ahead with a termination and this was linked to performance bonuses. Critics greeted this news with dismay, claiming there is a 'conveyor-belt culture pervading the industry'. *Daily Mail* 18 October 2017 dailym.ai/2xRSOLv

Don't drink in front of children

Research will often confirm what has been intuitively known for years. The Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) has released a new report that says even moderate drinking by parents has an adverse effect on their children. It can make them feel embarrassed and worried; and it disrupts bedtimes. The IAS claims this research stands apart from other alcohol studies as the first to show that even low-level parental drinking can prove damaging to children. Children notice changes in behaviour even when drinking by parents is moderate, says the report. *Institute of Alcohol Studies* 18 October 2017 bit.ly/2zyAoBx

Reduction in homebirths

Just one in 50 babies in England and Wales was born at home in 2016 (National Office of Statistics). This was the lowest number since 2001. Of the 676,271 births in England and Wales, just 2.1% were born at home. The reason, it's claimed, is an overstretched NHS where more and more midwives are helping out in labour wards and thus are unavailable for home births. 'Women are being failed as they are being denied choices,' said Elizabeth Duff, Senior Policy Adviser at the National Childbirth Trust. *Guardian* 16 October 2017 bit.ly/2gKv5a9

Shortage of health visitors

It's not just midwives that are lacking in the NHS. Opposition MPs claim that a lack of health visitors means babies are being denied basic health checks. New figures show the number of health visitors has fallen by 900 in a year, with almost 10 per cent fewer staff in post. Statistics from NHS Digital show that the total workforce is now the lowest it has been since 2013, with 8,588 staff employed across the health service. Babies are supposed to receive a visit around the end of their first year, but figures show that a quarter of babies missed this, with London the worst performer with half of babies missing out. *Daily Telegraph* 17 October 2017 bit.ly/2yzJFuL

Death before birth trauma

Eutyclus notices that Zoe Coates-Clark, founder of the 'Saying Goodbye' charity which encourages church services for women who have suffered the trauma of miscarriage, is publishing a book under this same title. Zoe would agree there are still lots of lessons to be learnt for coping. For instance, The Death Before Birth report, from the Universities of Birmingham and Bristol, says that parents are often not told the options available to them for disposing of pregnancy remains. 'It's like a bereavement - and you need time to process what has happened and say goodbye,' one miscarrying mother explained. *BBC Online* 10 October 2017 bbc.in/2xvSG45

Mental health crisis

A third of GPs' 'sick notes' are for mental health problems, official figures show. Levels of anxiety are soaring across Britain. New NHS data reveals how more than five million people are being signed off work every year with mental health and behavioural conditions. The Royal College of Psychiatrists said the figures were 'alarming' and is urging employers to do more to help support staff who struggle with common mental health problems such as depression. The NHS said mental health was now 'front and centre' of the health service agenda. *Telegraph* 31 August 2017 bit.ly/2vOXszf

Harnessing grey talent

By the time the NHS is 100 in 2048, Britain will have more than 100,000 centenarians. We are living longer and living better as well. 'For more than half a century now, we have treated the trials of sickness, ageing and mortality as medical concerns,' says surgeon Atul Gawande in his book *Being Mortal*. A failed strategy, he insists. In that spirit, Transform Aging has launched a pilot scheme in England's South-West aimed at finding and funding grey social entrepreneurs with the drive and potential to make a difference in their communities. *Guardian* 18 October 2017 bit.ly/2gJlfug

Global atheist convention called off

And finally... *Eutyclus* couldn't help noticing that the third Global Atheists Convention planned for Australia next year has been cancelled, because of 'lack of interest'. The chosen theme 'Reason to Hope' would have been quite appropriate for a Christian event. Invited international speakers included Richard Dawkins and the author Salmon Rushdie who once said religion was 'poison in the blood'. It would have been interesting to witness how some of the world's top atheist minds would have approached the theme of hope in our times. Sadly it is not to be. *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 November 2017 bit.ly/2z2hshL