

Faith Digest

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Brits OK prayer at town halls. The British government has fast-tracked a move to restore the rights of towns and cities to hold prayers as part of their official business, effectively overriding a High Court order to stop the practice. Communities Secretary Eric Pickles spearheaded the introduction of a new "general power of competence of local authorities in England" that gives new powers to local governments to resume prayers and to sidestep the court ruling issued two months ago. In its own decision against Bideford Town Council, in southwest England, the High Court said in February it was illegal for town halls to continue with the centuries-old practice of conducting prayers at the start of official meetings. The British government now says, "Parliament has been clear that councils should have greater freedom from interference." In broadening these new powers to town and parish councils, it adds, it enables them to innovate and "hands them back the freedom to pray."

Poll: Christianity good for the poor and children, bad for sex.

Americans feel the Christian faith has a positive impact on help for the poor and raising children with good morals, according to a new poll, but it gets a bad rap on its impact on sexuality in society. In a new study conducted by [Grey Matter Research](#), more than 1,000 American adults were asked if the Christian faith had a positive, negative or no real impact on 16 different areas of society, such as crime, poverty and the role of women in society. Strong majorities (72 percent) said Christianity is good for helping the poor and instilling morality in children. Around half (52 percent) said Christianity helps keep the United States a strong nation, and nearly as many (49 percent) said the faith has a positive impact on the role of women in society. Americans hold their most negative perception for how Christianity impacts sexuality, with 37 percent who feel there was a

negative impact, compared to only 26 percent who feel it was positive. The total sample of 1,011 adults selected at random from all 50 states had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Cure for homosexuality? London's mayor axed an ad campaign spearheaded by two conservative Christian groups because their ads suggest homosexuality is a disease that can be cured through prayer. Core Issues Trust and [Anglican Mainstream](#) made posters reading: "Post-gay and proud. Get over it!" and had planned to plaster them on the sides of London's iconic double-decker red buses. The slogan mimicked a recent drive by the pro-gay rights group Stonewall, which used the line: "Some people are gay. Get over it." Core Issues and Anglican Mainstream both fund "reparative therapy" for gay men and lesbians to "cure" them of homosexuality. The Christian groups' campaign had been scheduled to cover the sides of buses for two weeks, but London Mayor Boris Johnson stepped in to ban it. "It is clearly offensive to suggest being gay is an illness someone recovers from," Johnson said. "And I am not prepared to have that suggestion driven around London on our buses."

—Compiled from *Religion News Service*