

PRESS RELEASE – IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 3 APRIL 2007

SKEGNESS WEEK 1

Spring Harvest reaffirms position on substitutionary atonement – 'Jeffrey John has got it wrong'

Speaking at this year's Spring Harvest Word Alive, Bishops Pete Broadbent and Wallace Benn were united in their dismay over the recent statement by Jeffrey John that the Church's traditional teaching on the cross is 'repulsive' and 'insane.' 'Jeffrey John ... is saying that the cross is not about anger or wrath or sin or atonement, but only about God's unconditional love. There is, he says, nothing to understand in the cross which is anything to do with sacrifice or Jesus dying for our sins – and we say No. You've got it wrong.'

The Very Reverend Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans, was speaking on a Radio 4 Lent Talk broadcast this week on Wednesday, in which he attacked the Church's teaching that Christ died to make atonement for the sins of the world and said that being forgiven because 'repulsive as well as nonsensical.'



Pete Broadbent
Photo: Rob Partridge

The Rt Revd Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden and Team Leader of the Spring Harvest Leadership Team, stated in response; 'You cannot read the Old Testament and New Testament and blank out an entirety of language and concept and understanding that means that we are guilty sinners, we need our sins to be paid for and we need Jesus Christ to die for us. That is what the Creeds say, it is what the Bible says and you cannot rewrite them. You cannot understand Jesus Christ without understanding Old Testament atonement material.'

The Rt Revd Wallace Benn added that 'the truth that Jesus died as our sin-bearing substitute carrying the punishment for our sins on the cross is the glorious heart of the Gospel. It displays the love of God: Father, Son and Spirit, for us. To deny or vilify that is a tragic denial of the power and heart of the Gospel. I hope Jeffrey John will speedily reconsider and repent of his attack on apostolic Christianity.'

Acknowledging that arguments over the precise nature of the atonement have caused dissension in the Church recently, Pete Broadbent added 'Of course there are some very raw discussions amongst Christians about quite how Jesus died in our place and what that meant and how He suffered for our sins – but to ignore the entirety of the language about atonement and sacrifice and the cross is to nullify the message of what Good Friday and Jesus dying for us is all about.'

Jesus Christ is sacrificed and he washes away the sins of the whole world and he completes the understanding of Scripture and fulfils it in a completely new way.' He added that he was disappointed that the BBC were using their schedules to undermine the message of Easter.

To contact the Rt Revd Wallace Benn please phone 01323 648462

To contact the Rt Revd Pete Broadbent please phone 01754 762723

ENDS

For media enquiries only contact: Rebecca E Bowater, Marketing Administrator, on 01825 746513 or alternatively email: press@springharvest.org