

**World Briefs**

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unanimously convicting Creech of violating church law. A defiant Creech, 55, predicted after the verdict that it would "widen the wound of the soul" of the 9.5-million-member church.

"The church has said it will use its power – legal power, spiritual power and financial power – to enforce bigotry. It is a sad day. It is a scandalous day for the United Methodist Church," he said.

**French law**

PARIS — A court in France has upheld its new law granting extensive legal rights to unmarried couples, including gays.

After a year of heated debate, the National Assembly approved the law in October by a vote of 315-249. Conservative lawmakers had asked the 9-member constitutional watchdog group to decide whether the law violated the constitution, in which case it would have been void.

The law will take effect in the coming months after President Jacques Chirac signs it as a symbolic gesture.

The law would affect an unknown number of gay couples as well as the 4.4 million heterosexual couples who live together but are not married.

The law will let couples file joint tax forms after three years together; help people bring foreign partners to France; force employers to take couples' joint vacation plans into account; and make partners accountable for each others' debts.

**Adoption ban lifted**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The state of California has dropped its ban on gays and lesbians adopting foster children.

The move by Gov. Gray Davis' administration rescinded a 1995 order by then-Republican Gov. Pete Wilson. Gay activists applauded the change as a victory for families, while conservative religious leaders condemn it as "a disaster for children."

Before the ban was dropped, gays and lesbians could still win the right to adopt, but it meant hiring a lawyer and hoping a judge would overrule the state's opposition.

Attorneys representing gay and lesbian groups challenged the regulation earlier this year. State Department of Social Services attorneys "concluded that it was an underground regulation, or one that did not go through the proper legal process," agency spokeswoman Sidonie Squier said. ▼

**po • et • ry** \ 'pō-ə-trē n. 1 à : a metrical writing: VERSE b : the productions of a poet : POEMS 2 : writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound and rhythm



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