



The Diocese of Southwark

11 October 2023

The Bishop of Southwark

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun

Trinity House
4 Chapel Court
Borough High Street
London
SE1 1HW
t 020 7939 9420

e bishop.christopher@southwark.anglican.org
<https://southwark.anglican.org>

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Living in Love and Faith

The House of Bishops met on Monday and the national Church has [now set out the next steps with regard to the Living in Love and Faith process](#).

At the meeting of General Synod next month, the House of Bishops will commend for use by parishes prayers asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples. Structures for standalone services for same-sex couples, based on Prayers of Love and Faith, will also go forward to for authorisation under Canon B2. This is a longer process, which will require consultation with dioceses before returning to General Synod for final approval - but we hope it will be completed by 2025. New draft Pastoral Guidance will also be brought to the November General Synod, setting out how this system could operate in the meantime. Further work is already in progress on the second part of the Pastoral Guidance which will look at matters in the life and work of clergy and lay ministers.

The publication of the papers for General Synod on Friday 20 October will offer greater clarity for everyone. However, I recognise that the long and careful process the Church has undertaken through LLF has inevitably been unsettling and frustrating for many people and many of our parishes. Some feel that what is proposed does not go far enough or fast enough, while others are concerned at the pace of change and direction of travel.

There is still a great deal more to be worked out and we can only do that in the grace of our common Baptism, committed to respecting and supporting one another, praying together despite our many differences, maintaining the bonds of friendship, and trusting in God. We have found this to be true in the House of Bishops, which is committed to exploring how pastoral provision can be made to ensure that conviction of conscience can be protected. I know from my individual encounters with clergy of differing convictions that this is true of our Diocesan family with all its diversity, too.

Be assured that, however you feel about the recommendations of the House of Bishops, whatever your theological perspectives or personal concerns, I am committed to each one of you, to respecting your conscience and honouring your convictions. In addition, I ask that we continue to speak well of each other as befits our incorporation into the Body of Christ.

Please also know that support is available, should you need someone to speak or pray with at this time. Bishop Rosemarie, Bishop Martin and I are all available to you, as are the Archdeacons. If this process reveals needs that are better explored in a therapeutic context, do explore the confidential counselling options available in Terms of Service or contact Canon Leanne Roberts, the Dean of Clergy Well-Being.

I am certain that we can and should continue to pray and stay together. There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. We find our unity in the person and work of Christ. We belong to Him as friends, co-heirs and fellow-labourers. We are, even as we have these conversations, signs of hope to our parishes and our world.

Thank you for our partnership in the Gospel and please be sure of my prayers and good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Southwark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun
The Bishop of Southwark