

Update on Prayer of Love and Faith from the House of Bishops

On 9th October I was present as a participant observer (ie I can speak but not vote) at the House of Bishops met to consider their recommendations to the General Synod in November concerning the proposal for Prayers of Love and Faith, including for same-sex couples.

The press release ([HERE](#)) outlines their recommendations:

1. To commend a suite of Prayers of Love and Faith for use with same-sex couples in private or public worship, but not separate services.
2. To ask General Synod to begin a process to formally authorise separate special services under Canon B2 after consultation with Diocesan Synods.
3. To bring draft pastoral guidance on how this should be managed to the General Synod.
4. To do more work on 'Pastoral Reassurance' to respect the conscience of those who dissent from their introduction or use.

The press release does not make clear the depth of disagreement within the House about these proposals. While the details of the discussions in the House of Bishops remain confidential, until minutes are published on October 20th, nevertheless that disquiet has led to a response from a number of bishops, including myself, published today and sent to those overseeing the PLF work, which can be found [HERE](#).

It should be recognised that at the moment there are no official proposals to change the Anglican Doctrine of Marriage (Canon B30) as being between one man and one woman for life, and that marriage is the only proper place for expression of sexual intimacy. However the General Synod also asked that the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be "indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England", and it was promised that "Prayers", "Pastoral Guidance" and "Pastoral Reassurance" would be returned to Synod together, not in a piecemeal fashion, to secure the greatest unity possible within the diversity of the Church. Commending the 'Prayers' for public worship without completing work on Pastoral Guidance and Reassurance fails to do that, even if stand-alone services are to go through a more usual 'due process'.

I am deeply concerned that the approach that is being proposed will ultimately harm our unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity as a Church, and seriously impact our mission. I believe it is necessary, in commitment to my consecration vows- to uphold God's Word, to teach the doctrine of Christ and refute error- to publicly raise these concerns, that I have been expressing in the House.

When the fuller details of the proposals are published, I hope to address specific concerns in more detail. I continue to be supportive of the approach of the CEEC and encourage you to keep in step with their collective response. The Ebbsfleet Team and I are available for help or counsel if needed; and in my next update I will share some great news about new appointments to the Team. I am hugely grateful for your prayers and encouragement, which I felt tangibly in these past weeks. But for now, let me encourage you to read again Psalm 4: where distress is turned to prayer (v1), godliness becomes the foundation for blessing (v2-3), humility restrains our anger (v4), and we are called to faithfulness and faith (v5), so we find our joy and peace in the Lord (v6-8). Let's do that then!