

House of Bishops' pastoral letter on same sex marriage.

from : The Vicar

27th Feb '14

As I promised in church last week, I have posted here some information for people to look at, think and pray about and, if so minded, act upon.

I am deeply shocked by this so-called pastoral letter. It is theologically inconsistent; pastorally inept; and will be seen by 'normal' people as the Church of England supporting the recent moves in Nigeria and Uganda to criminalise gay people. And all in the name of 'church unity'.

What would Jesus have said I wonder? I do not think bowing to the perceived needs of international church politics was his bag!

I will be consulting with +Martin, who has been very supportive of both gay people and gay clergy, as to what exactly is allowable under canon law in respect of 'Prayers with gay couples' following both Civil Partnerships and same Sex Marriages.

I echo the words of the Vicar of Devises set out below, that we should give a joyous welcome to any who come to us requesting us to pray with them. And I would like this to be known widely.

Here is the link to the House of Bishops letter:-

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/02/house-of-bishops-pastoral-guidance-on-same-sex-marriage.aspx>

I have also given links to various web sites:-

Changing Attitudes <http://changingattitude.org.uk/>

Thinking Anglicans <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/006450.html>

It has been hard to find much in support for the Bishops' letter, but the 'Letters to the Editor' section in Church Times does give some balance to the debate.

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/>

Some further comments on the letter:-

On the day when the Ugandan President has signed the anti-gay bill into law, and a month after the Nigerian president signed the anti-gay marriage bill, I am acutely aware of the inadequate response of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the evil of both bills, supported by Anglican Primates and bishops in both countries. The support of African Primates is intolerable, in total opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Colin Coward

Your Graces and my Lords,

Thank you for your pastoral letter in which you encourage me to offer informal prayers, in church, with same sex couples who have either entered into a civil partnership or a marriage under the new "equal marriage" legislation effective from March 2014.

In the absence of an authorised order of service, I will be more than happy to arrange

individually tailored opportunities for informal prayers that are authorised or allowed by canon. I will ensure that this is well known within the parish so that any couples wishing to mark their union in prayer and thanksgiving to God know that they will be received with joyous welcome.

Posted by: paul richardson , Devises on Saturday, 15 February 2014 at 9:21am GMT

LGB&TI Anglican Coalition Response to the Church of England House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance Document on Same Sex Marriage. Issued 14 February 2014

<http://kiwianglo.wordpress.com/2014/02/17/lgbti-anglican-coalition-response-to-the-house-of-bishops/>

press release

The LGB&TI Anglican Coalition is appalled by the House of Bishops' recently-issued Pastoral Guidance on Same Sex Marriage, especially in the light of the Archbishop of Canterbury's presidential address in which it was stated that differing views should be accepted in a spirit of 'good disagreement'. In this document we see no acceptance of disagreement at all, but instead a heavy-handed and legalistic imposition of discipline.

The new guidance emphasises the well-known fact that same-sex couples will not be able to marry in Church of England churches even when equal marriage takes effect. Furthermore, despite the recommendation of the Pilling Report, the prohibition on blessing same-sex couples is reinforced. While these iron exclusions are in place it is simply ludicrous to speak of the Church 'Welcoming' lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGB&TI) people, or to pretend that this statement is in any sense 'pastoral'.

The guidance also excludes people married to members of the same sex from ordination, and forbids LGBT clergy to marry same-sex partners. This is cruel and unjust to clergy who have faithfully served the church, hitherto with the full knowledge and support of their bishops, and it will impoverish the ministry by driving away LGB&TI ordinands. Only those who are prepared to lie will remain.

The statement was made without any consultation with openly gay people, and fails to acknowledge that some of the bishops who are signatories are understood to be gay themselves. This heightens the corrosive sense of hypocrisy and cynicism with which this issue is surrounded in the Church.

We are aware that the position taken in this statement was partly or even mainly driven by fears about the unity of the Anglican Communion, and that bishops who wished to take a less harsh line were told that the Communion would not stand for it. In some large African provinces which are threatening to secede over this issue the Anglican Church helps supply the theology which backs the violent persecution of LGB&TI people. We believe that it is simply immoral for the Church of England to appease these provinces by sacrificing the rights and freedoms of LGB&TI people in this country or any other, or to place the cause of institutional unity above the cause of justice and humanity.

This guidance is wrong in tone and content, and will further damage the Church's mission, not only to LGB&TI people, but to all people of goodwill who respect justice and truth. It may seek to carry disciplinary authority, but it has no moral authority and cannot command respect. We hope and pray that it will be swiftly withdrawn.

END

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