



To all licensed clergy

3 November 2022

Dear Colleagues,

As you are probably aware, the College of Bishops met earlier this week in the first of a series of residential meetings to consider the way forward following the *Living in Love and Faith* process. The meeting was confidential, but we can say that, though there remains a divergence of views, we are all determined to continue to walk together. Like the bishops gathered at the Lambeth Conference earlier this year, we remain committed to listening and walking together even when we disagree.

Up until now we have been asked, as bishops of the Church of England, to hold the LLF process of reflection, learning and discernment, rather than express our own views. That is exactly what we have tried to do, listening rather than talking. Now, though, in the interest of transparency, we think it right for us to make our own beliefs and hopes plain.

In short, we believe that the time has come for the Church to celebrate and honour same sex relations. People do not choose their sexuality and all should be able to express it within loving committed relationships. Our preferred option would be for same sex couples to be able to be married in Church. We hope and pray that this will be the outcome of the LLF process. There isn't space to set out our reasons in this letter, but either of us would be happy to talk them through. Suffice it to say that we believe our conclusion to be consonant with the Biblical witness. We could do no better in expounding our views than the Bishop of Oxford has done in his booklet *Together in Love and Faith: Personal Reflections and Next Steps for the Church*, which has great theological rigour. You can find a link to this here: www.oxford.anglican.org/news/same-sex-marriage-in-cofe.php (if you would like a hard copy, please contact the Bishop's Office).

We recognise that others feel very differently from us and we believe that the right of every Christian to act and minister according to his or her own conscience on this matter must be protected. If the outcome of the LLF process is what we hope it will be, those who hold to a traditional view should be honoured and they certainly will be in this diocese as long as we remain your bishops.

It will be some time until firm proposals emerge from the College of Bishops and we do not know what those will be, let alone what Synod will decide. Having expressed our own views, we commit to abiding by whatever decision is made. We recognise that even the contents of this letter will be difficult for some, and we commit to listening to any who wish to talk to us.

With our very good wishes,

Yours,

Bishop of Worcester

Bishop of Dudley