

Press Release – 3rd March 2014

for immediate use

Steve Chalke and Bishop David Gillett: First Patrons for Accepting Evangelicals

A Bishop and a leading Baptist have become the first Patrons for Accepting Evangelicals – the pro-gay evangelical network

Bishop David Gillett has a long and distinguished track record in evangelical theological education. He was Principle of Trinity College in Bristol for 11 years, and the first Director of Extension Studies at St John's College Nottingham. Bishop David retired as Bishop of Bolton in 2008 and is now honorary assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Norwich.

Steve Chalke is a leading Baptist minister, writer and broadcaster. He is the founder of Oasis Global and Stop the Traffik. He is a United Nations Special Advisor on Community Action against Human Trafficking, and was awarded the MBE in 2004 for services to social inclusion.

Both are united in calling for a change in church attitudes, practice and teaching on same-sex relationships together with a genuine welcome for LGB&T people.

Accepting his invitation to be a Patron, Steve Chalke said,

“I am honoured to be a patron of *Accepting Evangelicals* which is an important movement within evangelicalism because it represents the growing shift away from old, excluding and subjective readings of isolated biblical texts towards a much needed more affirming, compassionate, rounded and thoughtful approach to the Bible, humanity and sexuality.”

Bishop David added,

“Over the years I have come to understand that the scriptures encourage us to support, affirm and celebrate all life-long committed relationships that follow the path in life gifted by God. I believe that *Accepting Evangelicals* is one positive way of supporting same sex couples to receive the same love, blessing and support from the church which I and my wife knew so wonderfully throughout the whole of our married life.”

Rev Benny Hazlehurst, Director of Accepting Evangelicals said, “More and more evangelicals are being moved to revisit the Scriptures and finding a new, liberating way of understanding them. We hope that this announcement of our new Patrons will encourage others to do the same.”

Since the inclusion of Accepting Evangelicals in the Church of England's Pilling Report last November, there has been a marked increase in enquiries. “We are preparing to announce several more Patrons during this year” said Benny Hazlehurst, “They will demonstrate that Evangelical understanding has moved significantly on issues around sexuality.” ENDS

Note for Editors:

Accepting Evangelicals is an open network of Evangelical Christians who believe the time has come to move towards the acceptance of faithful, loving same-sex partnerships at every level of church life, and the development of a positive Christian ethic for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. www.acceptingevangelicals.org

Background information on Steve Chalke:

<http://www.oasisuk.org/about/story/People/stevechalke>

David Gillett's recent reflections on the Pilling Report can be found here:

<http://bishopdavidgillett.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/my-reflections-on-pilling-report-have.html>

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