

# Accepting Evangelicals - Newsletter

---

April 2014

Dear Friends

## New - AE Facebook page!

Accepting Evangelicals now has a Facebook page. Please make sure that you visit it, 'like' it and share it widely. We value your comments – this provides an opportunity to hear your thoughts on news and opinions. If you would like to recommend a link for posting, please email it to [benny@acceptingevangelicals.org](mailto:benny@acceptingevangelicals.org)



## First same-sex couples marry in the UK

This historic law to allow same-sex marriage in England and Wales was passed in July 2013 but became a reality last weekend for the first same-sex couples who celebrated their weddings on 29 March 2014.

Religious institutions are exempt from being required to officiate at marriage ceremonies and the Church of England remains protected by the 'quadruple lock'. However, some denominations are having internal discussions on the future possibility of supportive clergy being permitted to 'opt in' to hold marriage ceremonies on their premises. The [Baptist Union](#) discussed this recently on 19 March where the Revd Stephen Keyworth shared a straw poll. People were asked for their personal position about the blessing of same-sex relationships and then to place themselves on a scale between the two extremes of: 'no, not never, ever' and 'yes, I can't understand why we're not doing it now'. He said there were two peaks: "No, I can't see that I would, but accept that others do...", and "Yes, I don't see a problem, but accept that others think differently." Those at either extreme were small in number. Stephen continued, 'In my experience in this role.... this mirrors precisely the attitudes which are present in our Union.'

The Methodist Church has held a working group consultation which closed in February and further discussion will be on the agenda at the annual Methodist conference to be held at the end of June. The United Reformed Church will take the opportunity to discuss the issue at its General Assembly in July later this year.

Quakers have long supported same-sex marriage and state on their website "Quakers see God in everyone and that leads us to say that all committed loving relationships are of equal worth and so Quakers in Britain wish to celebrate them in the same way". Unitarians will be free to conduct same-sex marriages in their places of worship if congregations wish to do so.

The [Cutting Edge Consortium](#) and the [LGBTI Anglican Coalition](#) issued a joint press release and held a press conference on Friday 28 March, the day before the first weddings were permitted to take place, to announce a statement signed by a number of religious leaders of different faiths expressing support for same-sex marriage.

“We rejoice that from tomorrow same-sex couples will be able to marry in England and Wales. As persons of faith, we welcome this further development in our marriage law, which has evolved over the centuries in response to changes in society and in scientific knowledge.



We acknowledge that some (though not all) of the faith organisations to which we belong do not share our joy, and continue to express opposition in principle to such marriages. We look forward to the time, sooner rather than later, when all people of faith will feel able to welcome this development.”

Two of the [signatories to the joint letter](#) are Steve Chalke and the Bishop David Gillett, patrons of Accepting Evangelicals.

Accepting Evangelicals is committed to encouraging theological discussion and prayerful reflection on the nature and historical development of marriage – please see again [our statement on same-sex marriage](#):

## Uganda update...

February saw the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014, signed into law by the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni. This new measure strengthens already strict laws against gay people by imposing a life sentence for certain violations and making it a crime to not report anyone who breaks the law. Currently, thirty-eight of fifty-three African nations criminalise homosexuality in some way and harsh legal penalties lead to a culture of physical abuse, vandalism to property, death threats and ‘correctional rape’.

Amnesty International reports that arrests of people suspected of violating anti-gay laws are arbitrary and people detained are often subjected to torture and abuse by authorities.

One writer highlights the problem here <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2014/02/uganda-anti-gay-bill-signed> :

“Frank Mugisha, the executive director of Sexual Minorities Uganda, the nation's primary gay rights group, reports that police are rounding up thirty to forty suspected homosexuals each week. In some cases, simply being unmarried and spending time in the company of people of the same gender is enough to arouse police suspicion. Mugisha also says that the bill's passage has brought a surge in anti-gay vigilantism and that religious leaders in the suburbs surrounding Kampala have been calling for gays to be killed or burned over the public address systems. "The situation is extremely worrying," Mugisha says. "We are living in fear.”

So, in the above climate, the response of [Bishop Christopher Senyonjo](#) is an extraordinary and hugely courageous stand.

## World Vision USA reverses its non-discrimination policy



On Monday 24 March, World Vision U.S. (a Christian organisation which

organises child sponsorship in some of the poorest areas of the world) announced it would no longer discriminate against employing Christians in same-sex marriages.

However, within two days it issued a [further announcement reversing that decision](#) after receiving an avalanche of criticism from evangelical leaders. President Richard Stearns had hoped that the original decision would bring unity but found that too many supporters saw the policy change as inconsistent with what they felt should be World Vision's commitment to biblical authority. More importantly, over 2,000 of the 1.2 million children sponsored by World Vision U.S. had been dropped by sponsors.

Meanwhile, **World Vision UK** has issued its own statement saying "World Vision UK does not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation." [Read the full statement here.](#)

## **And finally – LGCM is looking for new Chief Executive**

The Lesbian Gay Christian Movement are looking for a dynamic Chief Executive to succeed Sharon Ferguson and continue the work of eradicating faith-based opposition to full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in church and society. [Full details can be found here.](#)

God Bless and Keep You

[\*\*Accepting Evangelicals\*\*](#)