

Press Release

5th September 2011

for immediate use

MP's letter is misguided

The recent letter from Mike Weatherley MP to the Prime Minister on Civil Partnerships is misguided and is likely to confuse rather than help. This is the verdict from Accepting Evangelicals, who are working for the acceptance of same-sex partnerships at every level of church life.

The letter sent to the Prime Minister last month, which advocates forcing churches to offer Civil Partnerships goes against leading campaigners for changes in legislation which would allow them to take place in churches. Gay rights champion [Peter Tatchell has said](#) that "When the legal change comes into effect, no religious institution will be forced to perform civil partnerships. It will be up to them to decide. They will be able to agree or refuse," and the Government has consistently expressed the same approach.

But Rev Benny Hazlehurst, Secretary of Accepting Evangelicals said, "There are those in the church who still fear coercion, and there are others who seek to reinforce those fears in their campaign to prevent greater equality for LGB&T people. This letter will not help."

Compulsion is also not in the interests of LGB&T couples who want to celebrate their Civil Partnerships in church, even if it could be enforced.

Martin Stears-Handscomb, Co-Chair of Accepting Evangelicals said, "From our point of view, any compulsion would be counter-productive. A church forced to 'go through the motions' would curse rather than bless a partnership. The church should be seeking to bless genuine loving relationships, whatever the sex/gender of the participants by coming to the understanding that that is the right thing for a Christ-following church to do, not by being forced or threatened into it."

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

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