

Press Release - 15th January 2013

for immediate use

Steve Chalke calls for full gay and lesbian inclusion in church

Leading Evangelical, writer and broadcaster, founder of the Oasis Trust and 'Stop the Traffik', Guinness World Record holder, MBE, and church leader.

Now Steve Chalke has called for a rethink in the church on the issue of homosexuality.

<http://www.christianitymagazine.co.uk/sexuality/stevechalke.aspx>

In an article published today in Christianity Magazine, he says "I believe that when we treat homosexual people as pariahs and push them outside our communities and churches; when we blame them for what they are; when we deny them our blessing on their commitment to lifelong, faithful relationships, we make them doubt whether they are children of God, made in his image"

Instead he calls on Christians to enter into compassionate, respectful, honest conversations, and calls on churches to "find ways to formally support and encourage those who are in, or wish to enter into, faithful same-sex partnerships, as well as in their wider role as members of Christ's body."

This is clearly the result of a long journey and he acknowledges that fear has kept him silent up until now. But last summer he joined **Accepting Evangelicals**, and in the autumn conducted a blessing service for a gay Christian couple in his church, Oasis Waterloo. He now wants others to take the same approach.

To coincide with the article, Oasis Waterloo has launched a new section on their church website, with a teaching video, helpline and signposting to other resources, as a way of encouraging people to join the conversation. <http://www.oasisuk.org/inclusionresources>

Accepting Evangelicals spokesperson, Rev Benny Hazlehurst says, "Steve's courage and honesty will be an inspiration to the growing numbers of Evangelicals who are increasingly uncomfortable with traditional evangelical teaching on sexuality. It will also act as a beacon of hope to LGB&T evangelicals who long to be fully accepted in their churches."

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

Steve Chalke's article can be found at <http://www.oasisuk.org/article.aspx?menuId=31973>

Background information on Steve Chalke <http://www.oasischurchwaterloo.org/who/about-steve>

Christianity Magazine can be found at <http://www.christianitymagazine.co.uk/>

For further comment and interviews, please contact:

Rev Benny Hazlehurst:

07788 426090

benny@acceptingevangelicals.org