

LGB&TI Anglican Coalition

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LGB&TI Anglican Coalition Response to the Church of England House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance Document on Same Sex Marriage. Issued 14 February 2014

The LGB&TI Anglican Coalition is appalled by the House of Bishops' recently-issued Pastoral Guidance on Same Sex Marriage, especially in the light of the Archbishop of Canterbury's presidential address in which it was stated that differing views should be accepted in a spirit of 'good disagreement'. In this document we see no acceptance of disagreement at all, but instead a heavy-handed and legalistic imposition of discipline.

The new guidance emphasises the well-known fact that same-sex couples will not be able to marry in Church of England churches even when equal marriage takes effect. Furthermore, despite the recommendation of the Pilling Report, the prohibition on blessing same-sex couples is reinforced. While these iron exclusions are in place it is simply ludicrous to speak of the Church 'Welcoming' lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGB&TI) people, or to pretend that this statement is in any sense 'pastoral'.

The guidance also excludes people married to members of the same sex from ordination, and forbids LGBT clergy to marry same-sex partners. This is cruel and unjust to clergy who have faithfully served the church, hitherto with the full knowledge and support of their bishops, and it will impoverish the ministry by driving away LGB&TI ordinands. Only those who are prepared to lie will remain.

The statement was made without any consultation with openly gay people, and fails to acknowledge that some of the bishops who are signatories are understood to be gay themselves. This heightens the corrosive sense of hypocrisy and cynicism with which this issue is surrounded in the Church.

We are aware that the position taken in this statement was partly or even mainly driven by fears about the unity of the Anglican Communion, and that bishops who wished to take a less harsh line were told that the Communion would not stand for it. In some large African provinces which are threatening to secede over this issue the Anglican Church helps supply the theology which backs the violent persecution of LGB&TI people. We believe that it is simply immoral for the Church of England to appease these provinces by sacrificing the rights and freedoms of LGB&TI people in this country or any other, or to place the cause of institutional unity above the cause of justice and humanity.

This guidance is wrong in tone and content, and will further damage the Church's mission, not only to LGB&TI people, but to all people of goodwill who respect justice and truth. It may seek to carry disciplinary authority, but it has no moral authority and cannot command respect. We hope and pray that it will be swiftly withdrawn.

END

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Member Groups

The Anglican Coalition provides UK based Christian LGB&TI organisations with opportunities to create resources for the Anglican community and to develop a shared voice for the full acceptance of LGB&TI people in the Anglican Communion.

The Group Members are as follows:

Accepting Evangelicals is a 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.

<http://www.acceptingevangelicals.org>

Changing Attitude is a campaigning group drawn by God's love to work for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the Anglican Communion.

<http://www.changingattitude.org.uk>

The Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians (EFLGC), formed in 1979, is a group of women and men, most of whom are lesbian, gay or bisexual and come from an evangelical Christian background..

<http://www.eflgc.org.uk>

Inclusive Church is a network of individuals and organisations working to break down the barriers to full inclusion at all levels of the Church of England.

<http://www.inclusive-church.org.uk>

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement is a UK-based international Charity which challenges homophobia and transphobia, especially within the Church and faith based organisations.

<http://lgcm.org.uk>

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, and their supporters.

<http://www.sibyls.co.uk>

The Two:23 Network is a new network of Christians, connected by LGBT issues that aims to include and encourage all to discover the love of God for themselves, pursue the call of Christ and live in a way that cherishes others just as God cherishes us. It has developed from the LGBT-affirming ministry of Courage.

<http://two23.net/>