

Briefing - Lambeth Resolution on human sexuality

At the 1998 Lambeth Conference nearly 90% of the Bishops of the world-wide Anglican Communion voted in favour of a resolution strongly affirming the biblical and traditional teaching of the Church on sexuality. In particular they rejected attempts by many members of 'western' churches to have homosexuality recognised by the acceptance of homosexual marriage and ordination of actively homosexual people.

Many ordinary Christians will be heartily fed up with the constant discussion there has been about these matters in some parts of the Church. However the issue will not go away and unless people stand up and are counted the pressure to accept homosexuality as a valid lifestyle will increase. It is a deep concern to many that this issue may cause a division between the Church of England and the vast majority of world-wide Anglicans.

What can you do?

You can discuss this matter in your local Church, in particular at the Parochial Church Council. It is suggested that you pass the resolution attached to show that you stand alongside the world-wide Anglican Church in upholding the biblical and historic teaching of the Church. This matter can then be discussed and debated at Deanery, Diocesan and General Synods. In this way Churches and members can have a big impact on the teaching and the future of the Church of England.

It is important to be positive in approaching this issue, it would be easy to appear negative and condemnatory. The concern is to make known God's good purposes and plan in calling for chastity and fidelity within marriage (between a man and a woman) and outside of it. It is also important to declare the forgiveness, grace and transforming power of God; it is not necessary to be weighed down or beaten by the desires of our fallen human nature. This teaching has been helpfully summarised in a statement known as the [Kuala Lumpur Statement](#).

Debate on this issue in the 'western' church has tended to focus on the meaning of particular words in the Bible. This has involved trying to prove that the Bible does not condemn homosexual acts. Many of those writing for a pro-homosexual line have eventually been forced to admit that whatever twist they try to give to the Bible its testimony still stands against them and therefore they have to dismiss it. People dismiss the Bible either by arguing that the writers were simply wrong, or that they did not have the benefit of our modern knowledge and experience, or failed to understand deeper teaching about the love of God which has only become apparent to modern minds. Such thinking appears rather arrogant to any but modern western minds and it is completely at odds with the way Anglicans have accepted and approached both the Bible and the tradition and history of the Church. In all this what is often ignored is that the Bible reveals God's loving purposes for mankind and that marriage, fidelity and chastity are an important part of this.

The Bishops of the Lambeth Conference have tried to bring an end to the issue by strongly affirming the biblical and historic teaching of the Church. It is now up to members of Churches to act to ensure that the practices and policies followed by the Church of England are consistent with this position. The Church of England is not a hierarchy, a power structure, a bench of Bishops or a Synod, it is first and foremost its people and parishes. The call issued here is for members of the Church of England to uphold the truth against error and do so by embracing wholeheartedly the Lambeth resolution on sexuality.