

PRAYERS OF LOVE AND FAITH

What are the Prayers of Love and Faith?

They are a set of prayers and other liturgy, including vows and declarations, which the Church of England bishops are recommending for use in churches. The prayers are largely drawn from the marriage service and other historical prayers. They are being recommended for use with those in same-sex relationships (whether they are civilly married or not) and those committed to celibate covenant friendships (whether same sex or opposite sex couples).

Why do the Prayers of Love and Faith matter so much?

The Prayers of Love and Faith imply that something God has called sinful and detestable is a good thing which can be blessed. That matters because it tells people they don't need to repent of their sin. Without repentance there cannot be forgiveness and salvation (Acts 3:19). In these prayers, therefore, the church is actually preventing people from receiving the greatest blessing: God's mercy and forgiveness. They are denying the true gospel and preaching a false gospel which will lead to hell and destruction. This is not a matter on which Christians can simply agree to disagree.

Why do some people want the Prayers of Love and Faith?

People who are in favour of the prayers, including those bishops who support them (a number of bishops are not in favour of the prayers) want to see lesbian and gay couples welcomed in the church and offered God's blessing. Most do not think that the prayers are sufficient but would like to see the Church of England moving towards offering same-sex marriages. However, that would require a significant change in the doctrine of the church (that is, what we believe the Bible teaches) and it would not be easy to achieve. This is seen as a first step towards that goal.



But don't we want to welcome all people, including those who are gay, into church?

Yes! The gospel is for everyone and the New Testament tells us that plenty of the earliest Christians had previously been involved in homosexual relationships (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). The church has often been unkind and discriminatory towards gay people, and we must repent of that and do better. But the gospel that Christ teaches is one that begins with repentance. Anyone can come to Christ, but we will all be changed by Christ. We need to admit our sins, not celebrate them! And it is God who determines what is sinful, not us and not the bishops.

Is there anything we can do about it?

There are lots of things!

1. If you don't understand what the Bible teaches about this or why, find out more! Your vicar can help with this.
2. You can pray for the Church of England not to take this step. Pray for your bishop in particular.
3. You can tell your bishop what you think and why you are concerned. It is very important that they know what ordinary church members think about this.
4. You could also write to your representatives on General Synod to make sure they know what you think about this.
5. Dioceses are going to be consulted about the next stage. Could you stand for Diocesan or Deanery Synod?
6. Ensure that your vicar knows they have your support, because this will be a difficult time for them.
7. You could join Church Society, to support their work and to keep informed about what's happening.