

Living in Love and Faith

For many years the Church of England has debated the acceptability and status of same-sex relationships within the Church.

Over the last 6 years resources known as 'Living in Love and Faith' have been available to help congregations discuss matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage with the aim of helping different viewpoints to be heard. These and other resources are available on the Church of England website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

Liturgical resources, known as 'Prayers for Love and Faith' (PLF), have now been authorised by General Synod for use in parishes. The full text can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/prayers-of-love-and-faith.pdf>

These prayers may currently only be used in the context of a regular service; that is, they may not be used in a 'stand-alone' special service. So they could be used as part of Sunday Choral Evensong; but not in a private ceremony equivalent to a wedding. This may change in the future.

The PCC has recently agreed, firstly, that the Prayers for Love and Faith may be used in this parish; and secondly, that stand-alone services for same-sex couples may be used in the parish should General Synod approve the same at some point in the future.

However, the PCC is conscious of the range of views held on this matter within the Minster parish community. This paper is therefore intended not only to update the congregations about the current situation, but also to make available resources for those wishing to explore the issues further.

We are committed as a church to making space for Christians of all identities, traditions and shades of opinion; we are therefore trying to ensure that we honour one another and give generous space to all, so that no one feels marginalised or excluded in the life of the Church of God.

Paper issued by the Vicar on behalf of the Parochial Church Council.

The Introduction to the Pastoral Guidance appended to the PLF by General Synod is below. The full document can be read at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/living-in-love-and-faith-pastoral-guidance.pdf>

Living in Love and Faith Pastoral Guidance issued by General Synod

“The Prayers of Love and Faith are a resource for God’s pilgrim people as they journey on the way of Christ toward the fulness of his kingdom. They are another means by which to give thanks for God’s gifts in creation and redemption, to turn from sin, and to seek God’s aid in becoming holy, in proclaiming the gospel, in loving our neighbours and pursuing justice.

The Church of England teaches that Holy Matrimony is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, blessed by God in creation and pointing to the love between Christ and the Church; a way of life which Christ makes holy. It is within marriage that sexual intimacy finds its proper place.

However, marriage is not open to all, and even for those who enter it, there is often a road of growth and development. Many wish to celebrate God’s gifts and grace in other forms of committed, faithful relationships that are not marriage but nevertheless contains qualities and goods that are worth affirming and celebrating. Many would also like to pray for God’s guidance and blessing as they seek to grow in love and faith.

The PLF make provision for stable, faithful relationships between same-sex couples and for giving thanks for their faithfulness and their fruitfulness in service to God and neighbour. In that sense, they recognize the couple’s commitments to one another. They ask for God’s grace in the holy ordering of companionship and godly love as they follow Christ and seek to grow in holiness. They ask for God’s blessing for them and their families as they offer self-giving love to one another, and in their witness and service to their neighbours.

The PLF are specifically written for same-sex couples, because no provision is currently made for them through public forms of prayer. The PLF are not a form of marriage service, nor do they equate the relationships brought before God to Holy Matrimony. Nevertheless, they recognize all that is good, and holy, and faithful in these relationships and enable the people in these relationships to place themselves before God and ask for God’s blessing for their journey of love and faith.”