

A Message from Bishop Dagmar

Last week, the House of Bishops (that is all diocesan and a small number of suffragan bishops who are on General Synod) unexpectedly published a "Pastoral Statement" related to the recent introduction of mixed-sex civil partnerships. This statement simply reiterated in fairly legal terms traditional teaching of the Church of England, without any apparent awareness of addressing deeply felt precious matters of people's lives and without any acknowledgement of the wide-ranging listening, engagement and learning process currently underway concerning human identity, sexuality and marriage. Commissioned by the House of Bishops in 2017, this process will lead this year to the publication of resources for learning and discernment called "Living in Love and Faith".

The House of Bishops statement published last week made headlines in the media (which is how most of us, including myself, heard of it) and caused a significant amount of confusion, anger and hurt. Thank you to those of you who have been in touch with me to express this. Many bishops, including myself, share your anger and frustration at the hurt caused, not least to faithful church members, and at the breach of trust brought about by this statement, since it sounded as though the "Living in Love and Faith" process was just a charade. I also appreciate the frustration for those of you who are working at the coalface who felt their credibility, witness and mission undermined by the Bishops' statement.

It so happened that the College of Bishops (that is, ALL bishops, including myself) had a meeting this week and the Archbishop of Canterbury apologized for a most serious failure. We had a very critical discussion as a result of which the statement below was issued.

Some thought was given to whether this statement should go out at a such a significant time in our national life when the UK and Northern Ireland are leaving the EU. However, given the offence caused by last week's statement, we felt it was imperative to correct it as soon as possible and to articulate the culture of engagement with one another which the College of Bishops are actually seeking to embrace.

We as Archbishops, alongside the bishops of the Church of England, apologise and take responsibility for releasing a statement last week which we acknowledge has jeopardised trust. We are very sorry and recognise the division and hurt this has caused.

At our meeting of the College of Bishops of the Church of England this week we continued our commitment to the Living in Love and Faith project which is about questions of human identity, sexuality and marriage. This process is intended to help us all to build bridges that will enable the difficult conversations that are necessary as, together, we discern the way forward for the Church of England.

You can find this latest statement online [here](#).

Meanwhile, we are all aware that our world is suffering the catastrophic effects of climate change, wars are blighting the lives of millions of children, women and men with horrific violence, there are millions of refugees. And in the Diocese of Ely, in your parishes and

chaplains, we are called to ministry and mission in many different areas, some of severe need.

Thank you to you all who in many different ways are caring for people, here and further afield, and sharing the faith, hope and love we receive from God.

I remain committed to working with all of you, sharing in ongoing learning and discernment, and discovering the radicality of true Christian inclusion borne out of the sheer grace and huge challenge of God's love in Christ.

+Dagmar Huntingdon

30th January 2020