

ED

Who are you?

I'm Ed Shaw, an LLM in the Bristol Diocese where I lead a 6 year-old congregation that is part of a Bishop's Mission Order. I'm also the Director of www.livingout.org

What's your role been in the LLF process?

I was a member of the Pastoral Advisory Group (PAG). As the *Living in Love and Faith* project has been about resourcing better informed conversations about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage PAG has been focused on those conversations being better mannered through our "Pastoral Principles". They're now part of the introduction to the LLF course and book calling us all to repent of the ignorance, prejudice, hypocrisy, fear, silence and power play that so often hinders us speaking the truth in love.

What have you learned so far by being involved?

How much fear-induced silence there is in nearly all parts of the church when it comes to talking about our shared human experiences of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. In particular how many people worry that the Church of England is not a "safe space" for them – I thought it was just same-sex attracted evangelicals like me, but have found that's true of many in sexual minority groups who hold very different views. Turns out we are united in thinking that our "side" is vulnerable and about to "lose": all of which has helped me appreciate the strength of our reactions to each other's words and actions more.

What challenged you and how did you challenge others?

Everything was challenging – learning to listen better to those I disagree with, seeking to explain where I'm coming from in ways that can be heard, hearing the pain caused by the mixed signals we've given in the past, keeping hope alive when you think the easiest thing would be for us all to just walk away. I can't think of a conversation that wasn't challenging in some way. In particular, at my very first PAG meeting, I can remember having to keep breaking out of the box that other group members kept putting me in – presuming things of me before I'd had the chance to explain where I was coming from and why. So much of our own experiences on PAG informed what became the Pastoral Principles – acknowledging prejudice being just one example.

What's your top tip for those getting involved in parish, deanery and diocesan discussions?

Do prayerfully use the Pastoral Principles to help you assess yourself – and others. They are not there to stifle a good conversation (as some fear) but to ensure one. If, like me at that first PAG meeting, you feel like the victim of prejudice: call it out. If you feel afraid because you are in the minority: express that. If you see others being silenced: sensitively encourage them to talk. If you know you are ignorant about what others believe and why: gently ask them questions. Asking good questions is, in particular, one of the best things we can do to really appreciate where others are coming from and why. I'm increasingly asking just one question to help me understand the different approaches people have: "What do you think

sexuality is for?” That one question has helped me both see why we disagree, and better articulate what we as evangelicals believe in a winsome way