

Anglican churches across the globe urge the Church of England to ‘learn from their mistakes’ over same sex blessings and marriage

12 October, 2022, London, UK: As bishops across the Church of England prepare to discern a way forward following the conclusion of the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) consultation, voices from churches across the Anglican communion have urged the Church of England to learn from their mistakes.

In a new film, released today by the CEEC, as part of its *God's Beautiful Story* collection, Anglican churches from across the globe who have been through their own processes around the issue of human sexuality have described the pain, hurt and division caused, in addition to the financial burden of litigation cases.

Contributors to the film talk about the hurt, loss, tragedy and pain they felt through the process.

Rev. David McCarthy of St Thomas's Church, Edinburgh, described the period when the Church of Scotland adopted canonical change that allowed for same sex marriage: "It was one of the most difficult and painful experiences of my life. I had given 30 years, more than half of my life, to this church and it felt like the church was abandoning the gospel, abandoning the Bible, and abandoning me. And that hurt."

In England, the Living in Love and Faith Consultation has exposed the deeply held and incompatible views on human sexuality within the church of England.

The Next Steps Group has been tasked with reviewing submissions from the LLF consultation, meeting with key groups within the Church of England and enabling the College of Bishops in its discernment of the way forward. The College will be meeting in October and December 2022 with a view to presenting a 'direction of travel' to the General Synod in February 2023.

John Dunnett, Director of Strategy and Operations, at the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC), said: "We know there are deeply held and completely incompatible convictions within the CofE and that surface level solutions simply won't work. We've seen elsewhere in the Anglican Communion that, where liturgical support has been suggested as a compromise, neither side has been satisfied and long, bitter and divisive battles have ensued. For the sake of the gospel, we need to find a better way ahead – a settlement without theological compromise that is best for all."

There are some examples of where both sides have worked together, despite their incompatible theology, and where settlement has been achieved. This has been made possible by a "spirit of candour and a search for forgiveness", according to Russ Ayres, Former President of the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. Russ Ayres worked with Rev. Canon Jonathan Millard, who represented departing Anglican churches, to reach a settlement.

“At the end of it we came out with an agreement and there were compromises but they weren’t theological”, said Rev. Canon Jonathan Millard, Church of the Ascension, Pittsburgh.

CEEC is committed to praying for the College of Bishops in their discernment during the autumn and encourages all members of the Church of England to do the same.

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Notes to editors

About the CEEC

CEEC was first created by John Stott to provide a "collective" evangelical voice within the Church of England, was registered as a UK charity in December 1969 and incorporated in September 2003.

CEEC exists to provide for the continuing need for an overarching group to which evangelical organisations, networks, institutions and churches can belong, based on common understanding of the Christian faith and its Anglican expression, and united by a common vision to promote and maintain orthodox evangelical theology, ethics and liturgy at the heart of the Church of England. DEF's (Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships) are the de facto representative bodies of CEEC in each diocese.

CEEC aims to encourage evangelism, bible-based and Christ-centred formation of discipleship, evangelical leadership within the Church of England, and evangelical unity within and outside Anglicanism.

The membership of CEEC includes representation from Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships, Theological Colleges, evangelical networks including New Wine, Junia, CPAS, Church Society, CMS, Crosslinks and Fulcrum, and bishops.

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