

Government's Civil Partnerships on religious premises Consultation

The LGBT Anglican Coalition, LGCM and Changing Attitude have submitted responses to the Government's CP Consultation. We need as many people as possible to reinforce our arguments by submitting your own response.

The Consultation document itself and the form are both lengthy! We've prepared brief responses to the key questions. You're welcome to read everything and respond to all the questions but if you're short of time, use the ideas below to make a quick response.

The Consultation can be found here:

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/civil_partnership_consultation.aspx

The response form is at the very bottom of the page.

The deadline for responses is **23 June 2011**.

Please go there now and send your response – it will make a difference and encourage the Government to be radical in preparing the final legislation.

Question 1: Do you have any comments on our proposals for requiring faith groups' consent for an application to a local authority for a religious premises to be used for the registration of civil partnerships?

I am a member of the Church of England. I want the Church of England to be open to register civil partnerships because it is the established Church and its practice should agree with the laws against discrimination in relation to sexuality and gender now enshrined in UK law.

I would like the Church of England to allow any church wishing to apply to register civil partnerships to be free to do it.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the three ways in which decisions can be taken about allowing civil partnerships to be registered on religious premises? Do they cover the circumstances of all faith groups?

Before the Church of England makes a decision about allowing civil partnerships to be registered on church premises, I think it should consult widely with church members and especially with groups representing LGB&T people, and the decision of the Church should be endorsed by the General Synod.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposals for ensuring that faith groups' consent is demonstrated in an application to the local authority for a religious premises to be approved as a place where civil partnerships may be registered?

I'm concerned that there are some conservative Christian organisations and individuals who are opposed to the inclusion of lesbian and gay people in church life and to civil partnerships in church buildings. They might repeatedly object, causing distress and creating conflicts in local congregations and dioceses.

Question 9: Do you agree with our proposals for enabling faith groups to decide who should be able to register civil partnerships of their premises? Do you believe further safeguards might be needed? If so, what might these be?

I'm concerned that giving the Church of England discretion about who may seek to register civil partnerships in churches might be used to introduce additional conditions that are illegal under equality legislation. The Church of England might exclude couples who would be allowed to marry or remarry in church if they were heterosexual, for example, or where one partner is of a different or no faith.

Do you believe further safeguards might be needed?

I'm concerned that the Church of England will tightly define who is allowed to contract a civil partnership in church in a way that excludes people who if they were heterosexual would be able to have a service. The Church of England allows freedom of conscience to priests to marry divorcees because there is a diversity of opinion in the Church. Priests wanting to allow civil partnerships in church should be granted the same freedom of conscience.

Question 13: Do you agree that religious premises should be able to keep their religious symbols, decorations and objects in place while civil partnerships are registered?

Yes. Lesbian and gay Christians want to register their civil partnership in their local church because it is a religious and spiritual place with symbols of devotion.

Question 14: Do you agree with our proposals for arrangements for religious services following civil partnership registrations?

I want lesbian and gay Christians to be able to integrate their faith and spirituality with their commitment to their partner in love by registering their civil partnership in church. I would prefer the civil partnership to be integrated with the church service as happens in a church wedding. If priests were also able to register civil partnerships, that would be even better.