



Press Release

'Embrace Civil Partnerships' - Bishops told.

2nd February 2012 - for immediate use

The time has come for a change in stance on Civil Partnerships is the message from pro-gay groups in the LGB&T Anglican Coalition.

In its submission to the House of Bishops review group on Civil Partnerships, (made public today) the Coalition calls on the Church of England to allow churches to register Civil Partnerships, authorise services of Thanksgiving and Dedication, and end the ban on Bishops in Civil Partnerships.

With over 47,000 Civil partnerships had been registered by the end of 2010, the submission notes that "As social attitudes towards those in same-sex relationships have become increasingly open and accepting, the Church of England is becoming increasingly isolated. This is in turn damaging both our mission and our ability to provide pastoral care to those in our parishes, congregations, and clergy."

On offering Civil Partnerships in Parish Churches, the Coalition has already identified 95 churches who want to press ahead but General Synod would need to approve the application. Although negative statements have been made by the Church of England's Press Office,

"the fact that there has been no possibility of discussion within the Church about whether individual churches should be allowed to register their for Civil Partnerships is in itself a retrograde position for the Church of England to be in."

On services of Thanksgiving and Dedication, the Coalition has called for an experimental liturgy to be introduced in the same way that such services were permitted following marriage after divorce in the 1990's.

" The present situation where services of blessing are proscribed and the creation of public liturgies deemed to be wrong, is creating pastoral tensions, ecclesiastical ambiguity, and a culture of double standards... As a minimum step, therefore, the Church should permit services of thanksgiving and dedication to take place in pastoral response to the large number of civil partnerships. To refuse to respond in such a way would confirm fears that the present ban is motivated by prejudice rather than theology or religious belief. "

On the current ban on appointments of openly gay clergy to be Bishops the Coalition calls for an immediate end to the moratorium:

"One on the most pressing needs is to see an end to the moratorium on appointment of bishops in civil partnerships even if celibate. There is no justification for the current moratorium and it should be repealed immediately."

The submission also warns against putting up barriers to such appointments:

"Furthermore, any attempt to deter or exclude such candidates by singling them out for intrusive questions is not only unjust and hurtful to the individuals concerned but also damaging to mission and ministry."

In response to the submission, the House of Bishops review group has invited members of the Coalition to meet with them to discuss the issues further.

The Coalition is also organising an Act of Witness at General Synod drawing attention to the many hundreds of LGB&T clergy who minister in the Church of England despite the discrimination and suspicion which they often suffer. **The Act of Witness will take place on Thursday 9th February, 8:30-10am in Deans Yard, Westminster.**

A link to the full text of the submission is given on the website home page.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

1. **The Anglican Coalition** brings together all the UK-based groups that work on behalf of the LGB&T members of the Church of England. It exists to provide UK-based Christian LGB&T organisations with opportunities to create resources for the Anglican community and to develop a shared voice for the full acceptance of LGB&T people in the Anglican Communion.

2. **For more information contact:**
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3. **The Coalition members are:**

Accepting Evangelicals www.acceptingevangelicals.org

Changing Attitude www.changingattitude.org.uk

The Clergy Consultation www.clergyconsultation.org

Courage www.courage.org.uk

The Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians www.eflgc.org.uk

Inclusive Church www.inclusive-church.org.uk

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement www.lgcm.org.uk

The Sibyls www.sibyls.co.uk

General Synod Human Sexuality Group

Website www.lgbtac.org.uk