

Gay Marriage: Anglican Bishops and Senior Clergy Back Same-Sex Marriage in Letter To Times

The Church of England has "nothing to fear" from the introduction of gay marriage, according to a group of senior bishops and clergymen.

The influential Anglicans said the prospect of same-sex marriage should be a "cause for rejoicing" and argued the perception that the majority of the Christian Church opposed legalising it was wrong.

In a letter to the Times, the signatories which include members of the General Synod, the governing body of the church, and high-ranking clergy, said: "Recent statements by church leaders past and present may have given the impression that the Church is universally opposed to the extension of civil marriage to same-sex couples.

The article by Ruth Gledhill, published in The Times on the 21 April 2012 can be read in full on the Times Website at <http://www.timesplus.co.uk/tto/news/?login=false&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thetimes.co.uk%2Fto%2Ffaith%2Farticle3391056.ece>

The full text of the letter written to the Times by the bishops and clergy is given below

To: The Editor
The Times

Sir,

A number of recent statements by church leaders past and present may have given the mistaken impression that the Church is universally opposed to the extension of civil marriage to same-sex couples. We believe that does not adequately reflect the range of opinion which exists within the Church of England.

Marriage is a robust institution which has adapted much over the centuries. It has moved beyond the polygamy of the Old Testament and preoccupation with social status and property in pre-Enlightenment times.

While the Prayer Book states that marriage was ordained first for 'the procreation of children' the modern marriage service begins by emphasising the quality of relationship between marriage partners 'that they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind.'

The Church calls marriage holy or sacramental because the covenant relationship of committed, faithful love between the couple reflects the

covenanted love and commitment between God and his Church. Growing in this kind of love means we are growing in the image of God. So the fact that there are same-sex couples who want to embrace marriage should be a cause for rejoicing in the Christian Church.

We welcome current moves by the House of Bishops to consider again its view of civil partnerships and human sexuality. We hope this will lead to a recognition of God's grace at work in same-sex partnerships and call on the Church to engage in theological discussion and prayerful reflection on the nature of marriage.

We also welcome recent reported statements by the Bishop of Salisbury and the new Dean of St Paul's Cathedral calling on the Church to affirm same-sex couples who want to take on the commitment of marriage.

It is our belief that the Church of England has nothing to fear from the introduction of civil marriage for same-sex couples. It will be for the churches to then decide how they should respond pastorally to such a change in the law.

Sincerely

Canon Giles Goddard, General Synod, Southwark
The Very Rev Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans

The Rt Rev Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham
The Rt Rev Michael Doe
The Rt Rev John Gladwin
The Rt Rev Lord Harries of Pentregarth
The Rt Rev Peter Selby
The Rt Rev David Stancliffe

The Very Rev David Brindley, Dean of Portsmouth
The Very Rev Graham Smith, Dean of Norwich
The Very Rev Victor Stock, Dean of Guildford

Mrs April Alexander, General Synod, Southwark
The Rev Stephen Coles, General Synod, London
The Rev Clare Herbert, General Synod, London
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