



## THE ROAD AHEAD

***A number of people have asked for a summary of our approach to the current situation re the proposed Prayers of Love and Faith and Pastoral Guidance - we hope what follows helps.***

***Please do NOT post it on social media or blog/tweet about it - we would rather it remains 'discreet' to our constituency.***

The starting point for CEEC's response and endeavours with regards to the proposed prayers of love and faith can be summarised as follows:

- The bible is clear in its teaching around sex and marriage.
- The bible honours both marriage and singleness/celebrity.
- Issues around sexual intimacy are core to Christian discipleship (as taught in Scripture) and cannot be left simply to the conscience of individuals.
- If the Church of England endorses a position contrary to the plain reading of Scripture, differentiation (both theological and in practice) will become necessary.

## **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

Further to the February General Synod of earlier this year, the House of Bishops have commissioned three significant initiatives:

1. The refinement of their proposed prayers of love and faith.
2. The preparation of 'pastoral guidance' to replace the 1991 House of Bishops document 'Issues in Human Sexuality'.
3. A group to explore what it calls 'pastoral provision', which in practice might mean how a 'conscience get-out clause' could work for those who feel conscience-bound to resist the use of the proposed blessings.

CEEC continues to believe that the House of Bishops' proposals are:

- a de facto change to the doctrine of the Church of England;
- likely to cause division in many parishes up and down the country;
- bound to make it very difficult in practice for clergy and churches to resist the use of blessings;
- likely to precipitate the 'departure' of large numbers of people from within the Church of England who will choose to go to other denominations who remain orthodox in their doctrine.

## **CONCERNS NOT BEING HEEDED**

The feedback we are receiving from around the dioceses suggests that many of our bishops are wedded to the introduction of blessings and (a) do not feel that this is a big ask, since they perceive it not to be changing doctrine, and/or (b) believe that telling clergy they can either do or not do the services is a sufficient conscience protection.

The bishops have not yet acknowledged the depth and breadth of concern among evangelicals (both lay and ordained) about the proposals. They continue to commend that we should all 'walk together', without realising that divergent pathways make that impossible.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Locally - CEEC would like every evangelical leader/parish to do whatever is appropriate in its circumstance to convey to the bishops in their diocese the concerns they have and the consequences of the bishops pursuing their proposed course of action.

Nationally - please sign our declaration to help us convey the widespread scale of opposition. We are pleased to report that an email was sent to the College of Bishops just after Easter with more than 1,000 clergy signatures (i.e. those who had indicated their support for the Declaration). This is a great start - and we pray for many more to join us. We are aiming for 10,000 lay supporters to sign - at which point we will once again convey to the bishops the profound and widespread concern of church members. Please ask your Christian friends to sign the Declaration [HERE](#).



## **WHAT CEEC IS DOING**

### **PLAN A**

Right now, our plan is to articulate to the bishops our profound concern regarding their proposals, and specifically that any proposals to bless sexually active relationships outside of heterosexual marriage are biblically unsupportable (if we fail to convey to the bishops the strength and depth of feeling about this, we are not helping them to appreciate how damaging their proposals will be if endorsed and carried through).

In the next few weeks and months, other initiatives will add to the number of ways in which concern is indicated to the bishops.

Assuming we are successful in voicing our concern to the bishops (Plan A), and that they invite us to make proposals as to the way forward, CEEC will be advocating differentiation as the only way in which the introduction of the proposed blessings will not create schism within the Church of England. By 'differentiation' we mean creating new robust structures within the CofE (permanent and without theological compromise), which will guarantee the flourishing of orthodox evangelicals going forwards.

### **PLAN B**

If plan A fails (ie the bishops neither step back nor table a model of robust differentiation), CEEC will be asking the Evangelical Group on General Synod (EGGS) to help its members (and other orthodox members of General Synod) oppose any unbiblical proposals brought by the bishops for approval - likely to be in November.

### **PLAN C**

If both plans A and B fail, then in the immediate aftermath of any General Synod decision in November to endorse their proposals, CEEC will provide the means by which orthodox evangelicals can continue to flourish within the CofE. Work is already in progress to develop support for evangelicals in several areas including: alternative episcopal oversight; the restructuring of financial arrangements; what differentiation looks like within diocesan relationships; and securing the pipelines for orthodox clergy and lay leaders in the future.

**THANK YOU**...for reading this longer than usual article. Lets continue to contend - all is not yet lost. Please pray, pray and pray again.