



The Bishop of Norwich
The Rt Revd Graham Usher

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Norwich

14th December 2023

To licensed clergy and lay ministers, and those with permission to officiate

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

We are writing to let you know that the House of Bishops at its meeting on 12th December commended the [Prayers of Love and Faith](#) (PLF) for use in regular public worship or private prayer from this Sunday, 17th December. The Prayers are commended for use in regular scheduled services, such as a Sunday Eucharist or Evensong.

The Prayers have been published alongside [Pastoral Guidance](#). If you wish to use the PLF resources, please read the Pastoral Guidance which is helpfully set out with questions and answers. It also provides useful information for those who do not wish to use the Prayers. Please bear in mind that the italic sections refer to standalone services which at this point in time have not been authorized and which are still under discussion by the House of Bishops.

Prayer offered informally in private pastoral situations, outside of acts of public worship, is left to the discretion of the minister, as part of sensitive, discerning pastoral ministry.

Using the commended prayers as part of regular worship can only happen at the discretion of the minister with the cure of souls. It would be wise for ministers wishing to use the Prayers in public services to discuss this with their PCCs and work within the tradition and sensitivities of their local context. If you wish to use the Prayers in public worship, we urge you to have this conversation with your PCC. Do make use of the excellent [Pastoral Principles](#) to help facilitate a good conversation.

No minister can ever be forced to use the prayers against their conscience. Ministers who use commended prayers must ensure that they comply with the requirement that they should not seek to replicate or imply an equivalence with Holy Matrimony. If the minister using the Prayers is not the minister with the cure of souls, the minister who has the cure of souls must have given permission for their use.

LLMs are authorised to use the Prayers, with the oversight of the incumbent and in line with any agreement between the PCC and incumbent.

There is no legal entitlement to these prayers, unlike the entitlement of opposite-sex couples to get married in a parish church where they live or have a qualifying connection. Conversely, because there is no legal requirement for residence or a qualifying connection, couples are free to ask for the prayers within any church in their area.

While the prayers for same-sex couples are attracting most interest, please note that PLF also includes Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship and Blessing of a Home.

Finally, the House of Bishops is continuing work on whether to authorise these prayers within standalone services, whether clergy and those exploring ordination can enter into same sex civil marriage, and pastoral assurance for those who do not agree with the votes of the General Synod.

The archdeacons and acting archdeacons, together with the three of us, are happy to talk with you if you have any further questions about using these Prayers. If you are approached by the media, we suggest that you seek advice from the Communications Team.

This comes with the assurance of our prayers in this Advent season of expectation and hope.

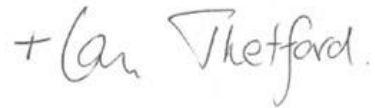
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Graham Norris".

Bishop of Norwich

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Jane Fynn".

Bishop of Lynn

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Ian Thetford".

Bishop of Thetford