

## **From the Board of Affirming Catholicism:**

Affirming Catholicism is gravely concerned that seven men have been commissioned by The Bishop of Maidstone, the Right Reverend Rod Thomas, to carry out informal sacramental ministry in churches which reject the direction that the Living in Love and Faith process is taking in General Synod.

The Church of England does not recognise or authorise lay presidency at the Eucharist. In the interests of unity and catholic order, Affirming Catholicism is therefore very troubled that, as the video released by St Helen's Bishopsgate about the service makes very clear, there will be eucharistic services led by lay people in roles not recognised by the wider Church of England. In the video, the rector of St Helen's Bishopsgate, the Reverend William Taylor, also explicitly stated that he considers this second service to be the beginning of the formation of a third province within the Church of England, and called on others in the Church of England to join this parallel process of selection, training and eventual ordination.

We are also deeply concerned with Mr Taylor's comments about 'ordaining' bishops from outside of the Church of England. We also strongly refute his claim that the majority of the CofE has abandoned the gospel.

Affirming Catholicism therefore asks the Bishop of London and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to take appropriate action against the priests and bishops who took part in this unauthorised service.

Matt Parkes, Chair of Affirming Catholicism said, "Permitting a form of Holy Communion in the Church of England presided over by those not ordained makes a mockery of the sacraments. We would hope that action taken by the bishops and archbishops would be commensurate with that faced by clergy who entered a same-sex marriage."

The service held on 23 July 2024 at St Helen's Bishopsgate was attended and endorsed by senior representatives from The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC), ReNew, New Wine, All Souls Langham Place and Holy Trinity Brompton. The Reverend Canon Vaughan Roberts preached, the Right Reverend Julian Henderson, the former Bishop of Blackburn and chair of CEEC, led the prayers, and the Reverend Canon John Dunnett, national director of CEEC, read the lesson.