

Our Ref: +MBW,+RT/ajh

24th February 2023

To: All Licensed Clergy, All Chaplains, Churchwardens and Chapelwardens, Parish Officers, All Readers, PTO, Honorary Assistant Bishops, Area Deans, Assistant Area Deans, Lay Deans, Deputy Lay Deans, Diocesan Staff, Diocesan Registrar

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Thank you for your prayers for General Synod as it met a couple of weeks ago. All the representatives of our diocese much appreciated your care during those few days. This comes to update you and offer some comments after a short period of reflection.

As you will be aware there has been much conversation about the proposals put before Synod by the House of Bishops. Proposals which came after several years of listening to God, and one another, through the Living in Love and Faith process with which many of you and the College of Bishops engaged.

These proposals focussed on the issue of same sex relationships and marriage although this is only one area addressed by Living in Love and Faith. In summary, the bishops reaffirmed their commitment to marriage as being between one man and one woman whilst seeking to affirm and give thanks for faithful same sex relationships; and to give opportunity to pray for God's blessing upon all. This was set in the context of a deep apology for the way in which the Church has failed to welcome, and include fully, LGBTQI brothers and sisters.

After four days of presentation, listening, conversation in workshops and much debate, General Synod collectively agreed to the proposals. They committed to continue the work begun and to bring back to General Synod in July amended prayers for those in same sex partnerships and pastoral guidance as to their use and the care of all people within the Church.

This decision has been painful for many. There are those who feel the proposals have not gone far enough and others who feel they have gone too far. And there are those somewhere in between who are content to see this as an appropriate Anglican middle way.

Cont'd ...

The Rt Reverend Michael Beasley & The Rt Reverend Ruth Worsley

Bishop of Bath and Wells and Bishop of Taunton

The Bishops' Office | The Palace | Wells | Somerset | BA5 2PD

01749 672341 | bishop@bathwells.anglican.org | bishop.taunton@bathwells.anglican.org

www.bathandwells.org.uk

Page 2
24th February 2023

There have been a number of responses across the Church and the wider Communion, and as bishops of the diocese we have also received questions and comments about what the General Synod decision means for people personally. We therefore want to share some of our thinking with you.

Firstly, we want to encourage us all to continue the prayerful, open and careful listening to one another and God that has been the hallmark of the Living in Love and Faith process. We know that there are some who are hurting on all sides of the debate and that this is deeply personal. Our archdeacons are always available to share your concerns with so please do speak with them. In addition, we have a number of chaplains who are there to listen and offer prayerful support. [Please do make contact as you have need](#). As your bishops, we want you to know that we wish to hear your concerns and your hopes as we move forward towards July and beyond

Secondly, we would like to remind us all that the decision made at Synod requires more work to be done on the suggested prayers to be offered and the guidance to be issued. This will mean that those who have supported change will need to show patience and restraint before using any proposed liturgies.

Equally, there are those whose conscience will prevent them from using any new liturgy and are concerned about what such change means for them. Principal decisions as to whether resources to be made available around prayers for same sex couples are to be used must rest with individual ministers. Should support be needed to explore this with wardens, PCC members, congregations or local communities, as bishops and archdeacons, we stand ready to support such conversations as necessary.

There will be much more to share together as we continue to walk as faithful disciples in the way of Christ. However, at this point we just want to conclude by saying that as a diocese our focus remains on the vision to which God has called us, to live and tell the story of Jesus to the world which God has made and in the communities in which He has placed us. We are reminded of the words that Jesus shared with his disciples just before he died.

'They will know you are my disciples by the love you have for one another'

Cont'd ...

Page 3
24th February 2023

As bishops we are committed to continue to serve the mission of God's love for all people and to seek to do so through nurturing the unity of the Church. Please pray for us as we seek to fulfil that purpose, as we shall continue to pray for you.

With every good wish

+ Michael.

+ Ruth

