

Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - June 2024

Dear All

This is a “Vicar’s letter” that is going to be a bit “marmite”; you may either love it or hate it. I certainly hope that you have an opinion on it of some sort.



The issue is this: Should the Church of England recognise and celebrate same-sex relationships? Or, more importantly: Does God bless committed same-sex relationships? That has been at the heart of the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) project worked on and debated within the Church of England since 2017. Last November, Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) were authorised for use. These allow for the recognition and celebration of committed relationships in a Church service, regardless of gender.

Here we ran the LLF discussion course four times across the Team. We are a broad range of churches with a wide range of opinions and discussion was healthy. I think a church that can discuss and disagree, yet whose members still remain committed to one another, is one of great strength. It is easy to simply retreat into ghettos of self-affirmation when our beliefs are challenged, but it requires real faith to allow God to speak to us through the experiences and beliefs of others. Good, faithful and loving discussion and study have sometimes caused me to shift my belief. Other times, my existing beliefs have been reinforced. Both are healthy. However, I am certain that when I eventually get to heaven, I will both be surprised by some of the other people who are also there and discover that some of my cherished beliefs were quite different from the ones God holds. Thankfully, God does not require so much that I pass a theology exam, but that I love my neighbour, etc.

Disagreement can make us uncomfortable and anxious. It is much more comfortable when we all agree on something. Ella and I disagree on parts of LLF/PLF. However, we still see each other as sister and brother in Christ and are committed to serving God’s Church together. This desire is encapsulated in the five Pastoral Principles published alongside LLF. As an expression of this we will be hosting a service at St Mary’s, Saffron Walden on Sunday 30th June at 6.30pm. As well as worshipping together we will each share briefly our thoughts on three issues that have come out of the LLF process for each of

us: “How I read the Bible”; “What I think the Bible says about marriage”; and “What should we do in the light of both of these?” You would be very welcome to take part in this service.

The Churches of our Team are open to host Prayers of Love and Faith. Such services will be led by those clergy who are willing to do so. I am one of them. It is my hope that the Church of England will continue to work on this matter and, in time, allow an even more equal celebration of love.

Yours,

Jeremy

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