***SCP and LLF results of a recent survey***

*Members of SCP European Province were invited to answer a short survey in October 2023 to assist their SCP representatives involved in the LLF process to gauge feeling in our society. Two questions were asked, and the results of 297 answers received is as follows:*

| **1. Do you agree that blessings of same sex couples in a "standalone" ceremony should be made available immediately to clergy who wish to use them?**  |
| --- |
| **Answer Choices** | **Response Percent** |  |
| 1 | Yes |

|  |
| --- |
|   |

 | 97.6% |  |
| 2 | No |

|  |
| --- |
|   |

 | 2.4% |  |

| **2. Do you agree that priests should be free to enter into same sex civil marriages, in common with the laity?**  |
| --- |
| **Answer Choices** | **Response Percent** |  |
| 1 | Yes |

|  |
| --- |
|   |

 | 97% |  |
| 2 | No |

|  |
| --- |
|   |

 | 3% |  |

*We invited those members who wished to add comments. The redacted comments have been very slightly edited (for length) and a selection of the many received is as follows:*

* I feel ashamed to be a priest in the Church of England while I cannot bless same sex marriages or conduct same sex weddings. The church fails to mirror the love of God and it is deeply distressing. I am afraid that in wider society the church is seen as a laughing stock and irrelevant in the 21st century
* The recent synod papers have been incredibly disheartening. We hoped for much, expected something, and seem to be about to receive nothing at all.
Prayers which cannot be used in a standalone service are not enough.
Prayers which can only be used with an expectation of celibacy are unacceptable.
Nothing said on the subject of clerical celibacy at this stage is maddening.
The recent synod papers were a body blow to the mental health of LGBTQIA+ clergy. Many of us who are younger had just about been holding it together, but now I and many other colleagues are in very real distress, impacting our effectiveness in ministry, and diminishing the service we can offer to the Church and God's people.
* This has become a matter of justice. The whole mishandling of LLF and PLF has been a scandal.
* Wherever I turn, I see l grieving colleagues wounded by the back-pedaling of the institutional machine. My young adult offspring repeatedly ask how I can bear to represent the Church of England when that Church seems to be intent on denying their LGBTQ+ friends a space to bring their whole selves before God, and I am finding it hard to answer them.
* The latest document from the House of Bishops is a terrible betrayal of both the apology for the Church’s homophobia to the LGBTQi community made before the Feb Synod and the now even more hollow promise of ‘radical inclusion’. In effect requiring each church to have ‘agreed’ to even include the PLF in a regular service is giving an implicit message that even praying for the LGBTQI community is a potentially dangerous and divisive act. It could not be more ‘othering’. It is a terrible backward step. Previously we were able to respond pastorally to the LGBTQI community, now we have to have written agreements from a PCC, tacit agreement from a church community and then ‘inform’ to our bishop of our intention to pray. I simply cant express how furious I am, having had to put up with the enormously protracted LLF process to find that we have been kicked even further into the long grass at the end of a Quinquennium which may not pass the 2/3 majority for the B2 canon. Yet again we are being sacrificed on the altar of unity, and the long road to consensus is tossed aside, along with the faithful and badly abused LGBTQI community.

These are truly scraps tossed down from the ‘holy’ table for which we are supposed to feel grateful. I am not grateful. I am furious and deeply hurt.
* I am currently in a civil partnership since 2008, and I’ve been with my partner since 1997
* I feel bitterly disappointed that the whole LLF process has in reality done nothing for equality in the church and in actual fact at this moment in time the Church of England seems a more dangerous place for LGBT+ folk than it did before LLF.
A few months ago I had so much positive hope which has recently been dashed and it feels now that a dark veil has descended! But what happens when a supportive diocesan retires? We are left potentially so exposed, it’s terrifying!
* I feel very let down by the House of Bishops who seem to have reneged on agreements made previously.
* The change of direction of the HoB since the last meeting of General Synod is deeply concerning, disappointing and undermining. Once again the very risky and sacrificial engagement of LGBTQ+ clergy in the LLF process has led to virtually no progress and potential backward steps given the likelihood of synod falling to provide the two thirds monotype now required for the stand alone services to be authorised. The services and prayers proposed are already so weak as to be near meaningless, the potential for even this to be rejected by synod is frightening and deeply hurtful to those who have sacrificed much to engage in good faith with an evidently flawed and meaningless process, that has achieved little more than to once again delay any progress on inclusivity and the honouring of the dignity of all of God's children.
* Given that the timescales have shifted again the apology from the House of Bishops should be withdrawn as it is empty.

Do the Bishops who have come out against any kind of blessing in church for same sex couples want to give the apology or would they prefer active same sex couples to be dismissed from the church?
* The whole thing is becoming a disaster and a disgrace. We need to take the law into our own hands. Answer the question - to whom would the Lord Jesus Christ have refused blessing and a seat at his table?
* I’m tired of being a second class priest and a second class Christian.
* I am very concerned at the delay in allowing blessings for same sex couples, I think this is harming the body of Christ. I think that marriage in the sight of God should be available for all couples.
* Why does what has been tabled for General Synod differ so markedly from was arose from the LLF process leading up to the house of bishops meeting in October, and what we understand was presented to them at their meeting?
* I am concerned that latest GS paper issued to synod does not allow for a range of opinions to be held as the PLF are used, but allow for only one interpretation of their meaning. Surely the point of these texts (already written as a compromise between positions) is to allow that compromise simply to be.

I am also concerned about the lack of transparency surrounding the debates and decisions made both in the College and House of Bishops. They have asked us to trust them in this, but as trust is now seriously strained, surely it is time for proceedings to be more open. There is dissent. Let us all see it and work with it.
* The GS2328 paper is deeply disappointing and pulls back significantly from what was agreed at the February Synod. It makes major concessions to conservatives, but even with those concessions, conservatives will not support the meager offering. It is also frustrating that there is no clear commitment to clergy being permitted to enter same sex marriages, nor for those in same-sex marriages to go forward for discernment. I could say a lot more
* This is not about sex

it’s about love…

Love one another …

How can we deprive someone of celebrating their love

Trouble is people get hung about the sex … which is not what this should be about
* I have no issue with same sex blessings and would happily carry them out. However, I am not currently in favour of same sex weddings in church .
* The Church angsts over declining church attendance, yet is slamming the door in the faces of our LGBT+siblings.
This continuing delay in acceptance and equality is beyond cruel and is shameful.
People need to hear and know that they are truly beloved children of God, that they are safe when they come to worship, that the Church is there for them at those special times in life as well as in the everyday - but the reality is we can't say this, can we?
God is love and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them. End of.
* I appreciate the sensitivity of this issue but feel that the C of E is well behind other churches in our inclusion policies.

Sadly I can see that it will inevitably be a long time before LLF will be demonstrated in our liturgy
* Please, please Bishops stand-up for the radical inclusion of the Gospel. Sadly, it's probably already too late for the great majority of people in this country to ever again gain respect for the church, but it's never too late to do the right, Christ-like, thing.
* It is high time that the church recognises and blesses committed same sex couples. This was agreed in principle at Synod in February, yet now a vociferous minority of conservative voices are trying every tactic to derail the process. The blessing of such couples is a very small concession to make in order to help them to feel loved and included in the church.

Scripture says nothing about faithful same sex couples. The ministry and teaching of Jesus however says a lot about inclusion of those who are marginalised by the religious establishment. It is high time the Church of England takes action to allow blessing of faithful committed couples.

Clergy should not be forced into the impossible situation of living celibately if they are gay or lesbian. This is a cruel imposition, and in my opinion is taking away from them a basic gift of God to humanity, of sexual union within marriage. To allow them to enter into civil marriage seems a nonsensical step for Priests of God's Church. In the future, along with other same sex couples, clergy should be allowed to marry in church.
* I have always disagreed with the idea of same sex marriage be it between laity or clergy
* If I’m entirely honest, I’d bless a same sex couple tomorrow. The wait must surely be over.
* Although I understand that this is a difficult issue for those brothers and sisters who take a literal interpretation of Scripture, I believe that we should also utilize our reason, and also offer great mercy and brotherly love to include everyone, including those in a same-sex relationship.
* Nothing in all creation is black and white there are colours and shades of everything and the 'bell curve' is a well tested Scientific fact. all things are on a spectrum and sexuality and gender are no exception.

I can respect that others will hold different views but do feel it should be left to the conscience of each priest to come to a place where they feel content with their decision and not forced to any action and not to condemn those who hold the opposing view.

all forms of discrimination are deeply unpleasant be it against women in ministry or having differing rules for clergy and laity. Faithfulness is at the heart of all relationships
* The majority of people now recognise that sexuality is not something you choose but comes from within you. Under these circumstances it is grossly unfair to discriminate in any way towards those who are LGBQ+ and the church should treat them equally with heterosexual people.
* LLF does not seem to have encouraged greater understanding of each other's views in the way it was promised. Both sides have not entered into this process with equal generosity and openness to the Spirit. So instead, those who are already the marginalised and oppressed have been forced to sit and listen to their opponents further accuse and abuse them. In short, the Church needs to grow up in its obsessions over sex. Scripture has remarkably little to say on these matters, Jesus even less so. Yet good Christians are being vilified, young people confused and put off, and promising candidates for ministry discouraged or forced into corners where they have to deny who they feel God has called them to be just to get through a system that appears to many to be unnecessarily invasive, judgemental and discriminatory.
We have an opportunity to now change the narrative. Aggressive threats must not be allowed to stop necessary change designed to bring about greater equality and proclamation of God's love for all.
* I expect I am in a small minority in SCP in not yet being in a position to accept a change in the doctrine of marriage or to proceeding to standalone same sex blessing ceremonies without returning to synod for full authorisation. I pray though that we can continue to walk with one another in our differences
* I am utterly weary of the Church raising expectations only, under conservative pressure, to drop them again.
I am unhappily aware, through prayers often left in church, of the ongoing hurt felt by LGBT+ people by the Church’s stance.
Equally I am painfully aware that young - and not-so-young - people of progressive outlook will not give the Church a second glance when seeking a spiritual home because of its (correctly) perceived homophobia. I often feel embarrassed to be its public representative.
If the outcome of half a decade of Living in Faith and Love is not the possibility of stand-alone blessings of equal marriage I will consider my future.
* I think that as in the case of the remarriage of Divorcees a Clergy Person should have a freedom of conscience not to conduct a ceremony due to their theological understanding of the teaching of marriage. However the Clergy Person has a duty to ensure another offers the service.
* I support implementing the prayers immediately. The hurt and upset caused by the delay in putting into practice the decision from Synod cannot be ignored.

Our faith is supposed to be based upon love, but at the moment a lot of people feel unloved by the Church which does everything to alienate them, or even worse, is forcing them to live a lie! This is also why equal marriage, both for laity and clergy, must come soon.
* Both these situations are already happening in the church of England and have been for some time.. Perhaps there should be a recognition of this first.
If the church of England is ordaining priests who say they are in a same sex marriage (which it is), then why do we make so much fuss over the marriage of lay people who are in same sex relationships, let alone the blessing of their relationships?
I am a single, heterosexual ordained priest who is grappling with the duplicity of the church in the face of these questions.
* I hold that same-sex couples should be able to enter into Holy Matrimony and that clergy in same-sex relationships should be able to enter into Holy Matrimony.
* I want to have the same right to marry my partner as do the rest of my congregation..
* I am a straight woman who believes utterly that this move will strengthen relationships, which can only be positive. I also think that we should definitely not be outlawing clergy who wish to avail themselves of a union that is perfectly legal. This is a start, but we need to have absolute equality. In know way does equal marriage damage the sanctity of opposite sex marriages.
* The ongoing delays in equal marriage and blessings are damaging for LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity, and also damaging for the mission and ministry of God’s Church. God is love. We must be a church which celebrates loving, committed relationships. We must stop wounding our LGBTQIA+ siblings. Please stop perpetuating harm and abuse. No more delays!
* Love is a blessing in itself and a gift from God.
The Church just needs to catch up and recognise it cannot control God’s generosity but rather respond with thankfulness.
Stop being frightened about blessing civil partnerships: those who in conscience don’t want it won’t but many of us will, with thankfulness to God
* The bishops documents to synod are an absolute travesty. ++J's insistence that unity is more important than anything else is lunacy when there is clearly not unity even among the bishops. SCP must press for change.
* To bless a union but not be able to solemnize is hypocritical.
* In prayerful consideration of the fourfold foundations of our faith, Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience; each one argues strongly for inclusion of same sex relationships within that which we consider holy and ordained by God. The Holy Spirit, as time has elapsed, has only acted to strengthen this conclusion for the majority of the Church and indeed all peoples.

More than this, every conversation I have had with young folk regarding their faith and why they don't consider the Church representative of it has ended the same - "God is love - why can't the Church see that?"

In our pursuit of one catholic and apostolic church, I am convicted of the need for us to truly BE catholic - universal, for all, enfolding all in the boundless love and grace of God
* The current suggestion of a distinction between church marriage and civil marriage, introduced since same sex marriage was possible, is very unhelpful and does not have a good precedent. (The Roman Catholic practice is not to be commended). Historically, a marriage was a marriage, wherever and by whomever it happened. We need to regain the wholeness of marriage in our theology. "We bless everything from budgerigars to battleships, why can't we bless two people who love each other?"
* Stand-alone services under Canon B5 have of course been taking place for many years, as endorsed by the legal advice issued to clergy by Nigel Seed, Chancellor of the Diocese of London, in 2008, in relation to services following a Civil Partnership. That advice makes it clear that the right of clergy to do this under Canon B5 exists as long as provision has not been made under Canon B2. The draft guidance would appear to completely wrong in law in supposing that standalone services cannot take place until B2 authorisation happens, and would have the effect of stopping clergy doing what they have been legally doing for more than 15 years.
* These freedoms are totally in line with Christ's Gospel of loving inclusion and should be made available without further prevarication and delay!
* When will our church realise that its behaviour gives aid and comfort to those who seek to inhibit the Human Rights and Civic Rights of those who happen to have different sexualities? Act with justice House of Bishops.
* Each priest should be allowed to exercise his/her conscience as with divorce
* I don’t have my thing specific to say beyond expressing my disgust and sense of betrayal at the apparent cowardice and double-dealing of the HoB. It’s almost enough to make one want to return to the bad old days of Peter Tatchell’s outings.
* This is a PR disaster for the Church of England and will undermine our preaching of the Gospel. Itselt it is the result of poor exegesis and catechesis on human relationships that, after 50 years, is now catching up with the Church.

In part it is a result of the use of unauthorised and poor translations of the Scriptures (NIV) in the Church. But, there can be no suggestion that this decision is the 'orthodox' pushing back against an unorthodox exegesis - only a refusal to engage with the LLF process would allow 'orthodoxy' to be identified with notions of human relating that are the product of Enlightenment and Romantic social codes. The Jesus option - which is being modelled successfully by Pope Francis - is one of leaving judgement to God and practising a real, radical - ie to the root, welcome.

Life continues - couples get married and then come to the Church looking for God's blessing (standard in Europe and becoming so in England) and these include same-sex couples. Unless you're happy with being a sect it is imperative the Bishops mandate stand alone services, allow individual clergy liberty of conscience and ensure that exclusionary beliefs are represented publicly in churches that seek to maintain discriminatory practises (thus allowing appropriate pressure by young congregants to be properly brought to bear on their 50+ homophobic clergy).
* The Bishops should show some courage especially if they are being threatened or bullied by certain factions in the church. If people are threatening to leave or withdraw support why is this considered more significant than LGBTA saying they have had enough. The Bishops cannot go on and on just postponing implementation. Our Church is no longer seen as inclusive, welcoming or safe for LGBTA members and less and less as a fellowship that many of us would want to commend to any potential seekers.
* Definitely yes to Civil marriage, but I do think that there is still more to be reflected upon reading the nature of a Church marriage.
* There needs to be clear honesty that civil partners and married people are in sexual relationships and not face even the slightest threat for that
* I’ve been ordained 30 years this year and, as a gay cleric, it’s never felt a more unsettling time. The Bishops must hold their nerve and press on
* Current proposals are a backward step. They do not help us move towards equal marriage whatsoever. Two years is way too long to wait for revised pastoral guidance.
* The level of disappointment among LGBTQI+ Christians at the apparent backtracking by Bishops/Synod is very (and reasonably) high - this is \*the\* opportunity the Church has in this generation to proclaim the Gospel of love into society - dissenters must not be allowed to snatch it away.
* It is becoming more and more clear that our local communities just think that the church is totally out of step and as a result are not prepared to even give us their time - even if that are aware that at a local level we have as much problem as they do.
I am aware of the problems and of those who would never accept either of the above, but we need to move on and been seen to get it right ( in my view and those to whom I minister.
* The Torah in our Hebrew Scriptures was and remains a sacrament of the presence of the God of righteousness in our midst. The fourth Commandment, the keeping of Sabbath, is a fundamental element of that Torah sacrament. When Jesus points out that the Sabbath was made for human beings rather than that we are made to for it, it is because he is promoting Love as the ultimate criterion by which we are to interpret Torah and therefore Sacrament. The Holy Sacrament of Matrimony is thus to be understood by Christians as God's blessing upon the love between two people, not used as a means to demean their love or to imply there is a limitation on love's ambit. It is wrong to reduce the radical meaning of Jesus' statement. As Catholic Priests we hold the Sacraments in the highest honour, and they should be interpreted by love.
* As far as I can see, therefore, there is no obvious reason why such God-given humanity should not be affirmed in same-sex relationships as well as in heterosexual ones. No relationship is perfect, whatever the sexual orientation of the persons involved, but they all contain the potential to reveal that God-given humanity. Further, I can see no reason, in the Bible or in Tradition, for preventing those relationships from being equally acknowledged and affirmed, with those of heterosexual couples, as blessed by God, signs and sacraments of God’s committed and joyful love for the world.
* At an LLF event last year I made the suggestion that those who misuse the Bible to restrict love seem to believe that God is dead. Surely revelation is rolling still and things can change. Do we want to run with a God of love who is showing us something new or do we want to place ourselves in a God proof bunker where he cannot trouble us?
* Why spend thousands and countless hours to end by offering nothing of comfort
* It is utterly heartbreaking and demoralising to see beloved siblings used, abused, excluded and left out in the cold to beg for scraps from the table.

Now is the time to look to the One who created us in love and to see through God’s eyes that all are indeed equal and have equal access to the Church’s blessing on their love and relationships, whatever that looks like.
* It's increasingly difficult to minister with integrity in schools, churches and the streets of our parish when the church obsesses over sex and continues to discriminate against people because of who they love. Prayers for courage, integrity and compassion.
* CofE needs to stop prevaricating and do the right thing. No more delays. More than enough harm has been caused already.
* POPE FRANCIS SAID: (substitute gay person for single mother and bless my partnership for baptise my son) "Think of a single mother who goes to the Church or the Parish, and tells the secretary: I WANT TO BAPTIZE MY SON." And the attendant says: No, you can't, because you're not married.. Let's keep in mind that this mother had the courage to continue with a pregnancy, and what is she facing? With a door closed! And so, if we continue this path and with this attitude, we are not doing the people, God's People right. Jesus created the seven sacraments and with this attitude we created an eighth: the sacrament of pastoral customs! WHO GOES TO THE CHURCH MUST FIND OPEN DOORS AND NOT TAXES OF FAITH". Pope Francis just said, "We need saints without veils, without underwear." We need jeans and sneaker saints. We need saints to go to the movies, listen to music and hang out with their friends. We need saints that put God first and stand out in University. We need saints who seek time to pray every day and know how to fall in love with purity and chastity, or who consecrate their chastity. We need modern day saints, 21st century saints with spirituality embedded in our time. We need saints committed to the poor and the necessary social change. We need saints who live in the world, sanctify themselves in the world and who are not afraid to live in the world. We need saints who drink Coke and eat hot dogs, who are internet users, who listen to iPod. We need saints who love the Eucharist and who are not ashamed to have a beer or eat pizza on the weekend with friends. We need saints who love cinema, theater, music, dance, sports. We need sociable, open, normal, friendly, joyful, fellow saints. We need saints who are in the world and know how to taste the pure and good things of the world, but without being worldly." That has to be us.
* I feel that no one will listen, however persuasive our reps are
* Jesus said we are to love one another...so I take that as we are to have mutual respect and love, we should not be an 'us' and 'them' society - Jesus was inclusive!
* People are waiting for this, wanting to book blessings for next Summer. Can we get some clarification asap on what we can do and when?
* The church has to give full marriage equality. I work in the NHS and the Church is at best as seen as irrelevant and worst harmful and hateful. Missionally the LLF has made things worse and shown a church that along with gender, race and disability that does not value all children of God equally
* I've spent much of my ministry working with young adults. There is no issue more likely to put them off having anything to do with church than our perceived attitude to LGBT+ people. (University chaplaincies are some of the only safe spaces to explore what it might mean to be LGBT+ and not have to jettison faith entirely, and yet they hardly feature in mission strategies or plans for connecting with young people- that may sound like a side issue but it's connected, as chapels in HE institutions which are owned by the university rather than the church are in some cases already offering same sex marriages so it's a real issue for Anglican chaplains who want to stay on side with both their employers and their diocese).

I am so tired of having to represent an ecclesial structure which tells so many people that they and their relationships are second class, sinful, less than ideal, etc. Either we are all made in the image of God or we're not. And since I believe that the Bible, theology and experience all point to the former, I would like to be able to offer ceremonies which recognise that reality. I am frankly fed up of not being allowed to do what \*my\* conscience tells me is right. It's time we stopped pandering to extremists who will never be satisfied with any kind of compromise, and holding up the mission of the church in the process.
* The apparent delay and prevarication in implementing what we all thought had been agreed at the February meeting of General Synod is causing significant pastoral damage within the Church, and significant reputational damage outside it. The Bishops must be deeply cognizant of this as they consider the next steps in their response.
* The church should be offering full marriage to all who ask, regardless of sex. The present situation is bringing the church into disrepute. Discrimination on the grounds of sex or sexuality is not appropriate for the church, and we should be moving towards removing discriminatory aspects of the Church of England in all forms and removing the structures that embed and codify discrimination
* This issue will split the church, of that we can be certain. But then the church itself has grown out of disagreement and dissent. The Holy Spirit seems to be shouting at us to grown in our understanding of love and the need for a grounded understanding of relationships that help us grow and thrive as children of God, rather than forcing us into dark corners of shame inflicted by our neighbours.
* The matter of doctrine should be addressed so that we reflect who we are as humans and our development today.
* As in the marriage of opposite sex couples and the profession of vows of religious a public act of commitment in the sight of God and others helps and supports couples through difficult times
* Love does mean equality but it also welcomes difference. Equal does not mean the same. Marriage is not something that is to be viewed through a single lens. Each couple create the marriage together with God and each one is different. Welcoming LGBTI+ couples adds to and does not take away from that which is currently accepted.
Fear of the unknown is a terrible thing but this is not unknown. Those of us who are gay know the importance of marriage and we don't want to change that. Our parents (in lots of cases) celebrated joyful loving marriages. We want that to continue. We are called to enter into the same marriage and yet it is naturally different because we are not heterosexual. This is to be celebrated. It brings a new renewal to marriage and does not stop it. We should celebrate all that can be and also celebrate the difference.
* It is so important to move forward on this, as so many couples Lay and Ordained feel disenfranchised from their Church.
* So much has already been said and written on this that there feels like little useful to add, but just to say that so many of us are tired of the ongoing injustices towards our LGBTQ comrades in the church (both lay and ordained). This is a justice issue and deserves to be treated like one - i.e. something of genuine urgency, not to be constantly kicked down the road for yet more discussion and debate (which seems to be getting the church nowhere).
* The current situation of the Bishops allowing fundamentalist conservatives to hold the church to ransom its not just undermining and disheartening many LGBTQ+ and other inclusive clergy and laity it is badly damaging the church's mission, reputation and ability to speak with any authority on any matters of justice and morality
* It can be dis-spiriting and discouraging as a gay person working in the CofE at the moment; the LLF process seems to be running into the sand once again and I have little hope that this process will produce the “radical inclusion” that was spoken about by the Archbishops.