

Guidance on writing to your Bishop (Autumn 2025)

The Background

The House of Bishops met in early October to look at the progress of the Living in Love and Faith project, which was originally intended to explore inclusion for LGBTQIA+ people in the Church of England. In February 2023 the bishops had agreed to allow services of blessing for same sex couples, known as the Prayers of Love and Faith, and also to review pastoral guidance which prevented clergy who married their same sex partner being issued a licence to minister. The same pastoral guidance also prevents someone in a same sex marriage from training for ordained ministry. When the Prayers of Love and Faith were formally commended by the bishops at the end of 2023, it was only for occasions when they are used in an existing church service – during the services that happen every week – but the expectation was that they could be used in “standalone” services once some process was in place for churches to register that they wanted to do this. It has always been the case that nobody is obliged to use these prayers; clergy can simply decide not to opt in to use them.

General Synod has voted three times to support this direction of travel. However, in the face of a concerted campaign by conservative churches the House of Bishops has backed down. While the Prayers of Love and Faith are allowed to be used in a regular church service, the bishops do not want them used in one-off “bespoke” services (now the preferred term for what used to be called “standalone”). But it makes no sense to allow prayers to be said in a regular service but not at other times. The same prayers said by the same priest with the same couple in the same building before the same God are valid whether it is a Sunday morning or a Saturday afternoon.

The Bishops have announced that to allow bespoke services would require a particular approval through General Synod with two-thirds in approval, which is effectively saying “we aren’t going to do this”. On clergy marriage they have said that they need to pass legislation to allow this, which could take years of revision committees and votes, so is by no means certain.

The Bishops’ statement is effectively saying “we don’t want to do what we promised, but Synod has told us to do it, so we will pass it back to Synod but make it really hard and then it’s no longer our problem”.

Writing to your Bishop

The House of Bishops is due to meet again in December to finalise the decisions that they will bring to General Synod. This is an opportunity to try and

impress upon the bishops just how damaging their latest decision is. Inclusive bishops will value having your support. Conservative bishops need to know that people in their diocese hold inclusive views. Quiet bishops need to be encouraged to express their views and offer leadership.

Address the letter “Dear Bishop (Name)” or “Dear Bishop”.

- Write the letter in your own words, so it is original.
- Explain how the latest announcement affects you and how it makes you feel
- State your involvement in the church. Bishops need to know how this is being received by all kinds of people in the church – priests, churchwardens, PCC members, ordinary churchgoers, etc.

Some specific points that you could make include:

- If you have been a part of a PLF service, let the bishop know what it meant to you.
- If you are personally affected by not being able to marry your partner because you are a priest, or may wish to offer yourself for ordained ministry one day, or if you are unable to be ordained because of your marriage please spell this out.
- If you would be happy for a gay married priest to be your vicar, let the bishop know.
- That the bishops needed to deliver on all that had been agreed by Synod through three major votes, and that forever extending the process and making the bar higher each time just isn't good enough.
- If the actions of the House of Bishops are making you reconsider your involvement in any aspect of church life, let them know. Conservatives threatening to leave has weighed heavily on some bishops, knowing that inclusive Christians do not feel a part of the church at times needs to be said.

Finally, if you want your bishop to do something you could ask them to:

- Consider whether they genuinely want LGBTQIA+ people to participate in the life of the Church of England, and if they do to think what actions are needed to make this happen.
- Pay greater attention to the lives of LGBTQIA+ people in the Church and in society, as we are always asking them to pay the price of indecision.

- Question whether the decisions taken at the House of Bishops meeting in October could be revisited and overturned at the meeting in December.
- Ask them to support the Prayers of Love and Faith being fully available for use, and for those in a same sex marriage to face no bar to ordination or being licenced to minister. Also ask that they will be vocal in their support, as LGBTQIA+ people in the Church need to hear leaders stand up and support them.

Members of the House of Bishops and their email address

Diocese	Bishop	Email Address
Bath & Wells	Michael Beasley	bishop@bathwells.anglican.org
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Blackburn	Philip North	bishop@bishopofblackburn.org.uk
Blackburn	Jill Duff (Bishop of Lancaster)	bishop.lancaster@blackburn.anglican.org
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