



LGBTI
MISSION

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The LGBTI Mission is campaigning for full acceptance and affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in the Church of England.

If you're passionate about equality within the Church of England and want to work with us on any of these priorities, then please get in touch.

T: 07906445695

E: LGBTIMission@gmail.com

W: www.LGBTIMission.org.uk

Twitter: [@LGBTIMission](https://twitter.com/LGBTIMission)

Facebook: [LGBTIMission](https://www.facebook.com/LGBTIMission)



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The LGBTI Mission has come together to work towards the full acceptance and affirmation of LGBTI people within the life of the Church of England.

Over the next five years and beyond we will do everything we can to remove the barriers to full participation for LGBTI people. We will bring together organisations, allies and friends, including LGBTI faith groups.

We have three key priorities:

LIVING

We believe all LGBTI people and their heterosexual friends and family, should be welcomed and affirmed by the Church of England.

What we need:

1. Official recognition and acceptance of theological diversity within the Church on issues of human sexuality and gender variance
2. The fostering of a culture of safety for LGBTI children and young people within the Church, its schools and its institutions
3. A rigorous affirmation that the rites of baptism, confirmation, holy communion and funerals should not be denied to anyone on the grounds of their own or others' sexuality or gender identity

LOVING

We believe that God is love and that life-long, faithful, stable same-sex relationships, and the relationships of those who undergo gender transition, should be celebrated by the Church of England.

What we need:

4. Publication of devotional prayers and other materials for LGBTI people, and endorsement by the Church of England
5. Liturgical materials for use in church after civil partnerships, the marriage of same-sex couples, and to affirm change of name and welcome after gender transition
6. Parishes that wish to do so should be able to celebrate same-sex marriages and to mark the continuation of a marriage when a partner transitions gender



LGBTI MISSION

SERVING

We believe God calls LGBTI and gender-questioning people to serve the world through the Church and their ministries should be recognised and authorised by the Church.

What we need:

7. Allow those in same-sex marriages to enter the ordination process
8. Revoke all diocesan or national policies that discriminate against LGBTI ordinands
9. Establish national policy that marital status is not to be a barrier in any appointment to authorised ministry, including lay ministry and episcopacy



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I. Official recognition and acceptance of theological diversity within the Church on issues of human sexuality and gender variance

The Church of England has always accepted a spectrum of approaches to a wide range of theological issues. Part of what makes the Church of England great is our ability to live together in unity with those differences. For example, there are a range of views about women clergy. A space is made for those who for theological or ecumenical reasons refuse to accept women clergy. Individual clergy also have the freedom to choose whether or not to marry couples who have been divorced.

By contrast, there is no space for differences when it comes to human sexuality and gender identity. The official and only acceptable view is that marriage is only possible between a man and a woman. This doesn't just impact on LGBTI Christians who want to get married. Even though the House of Bishops says that being LGBTI doesn't stop you progressing in the Church, it is widely believed that pressure is applied to block senior clergy from preferment, if they don't agree with the official view on marriage, and there are no openly gay or transgender bishops.

There is no room for difference of opinion and this has a negative impact on LGBTI Christians and clergy. It prompts gay and transgender clergy to avoid public attention. They don't say what they really think about the issues and keep secrets about who they really are. This has a negative impact on how society perceives the Church of England. It undermines the Church and rewards collusion and silence. It also sends a damaging signal to LGBTI Christians.

The Shared Conversations have already revealed that although there are strong differences of opinion on human sexuality and gender variance these need not be the cause of division within the Church of England. We are capable of holding different views and respecting those views. We are stronger as a Church because of those different views and we know how to live with those differences.

Inaction on these issues is causing harm to the people we should be supporting.

We need:

- An acceptance of a difference of views on human sexuality and gender variance and an end to insistence that there is only one acceptable view.
- Bishops to feel encouraged and able to share in public their thoughts and beliefs on human sexuality and gender variance.

We will:

- Establish a Theological Resource Group to develop a clear statement on the full spectrum of human sexuality and gender variance, and the precious gift of sex and marriage in Christian understanding
- Publish the statement and encourage clergy and laity to share their diverse views on human sexuality and gender variance.
- Ensure that the whole Church is well informed about the issues by the end of the Shared Conversations.

LIVING

2. The fostering of a culture of safety for LGBTI children and young people within the Church, its schools and its institutions

Britain has seen increased acceptance of LGBTI young people. The progress seen in wider society is not, however, reflected to the same extent in the Church of England. Young people tell us that parts of the Church are disinclined to equip young people to think critically, to recognise a range of viewpoints, and to evaluate the theological, pastoral and sociological merits of a range of validly held perspectives.

This has a number of consequences:

- Many young LGBTI people do not receive the signals that they are safe and welcomed in their Christian faith community. This leads to low self-esteem, a withdrawal from pastoral and spiritual support offered by a faith in God and a connection with a faith community, and a disconnection with peers. These young people have often been part of faith communities (including baptism, communion, confirmation, primary and secondary school etc.) and perceived, anticipated or actual rejection is deeply damaging.
- Parents and carers of young LGBTI people no longer feel welcome in their churches and say they feel driven to 'choose' between their family and their Church.
- The one-sided dominant narrative about marriage, human sexuality, and gender complementarity is used as a justification of persecution and bullying of LGBTI people.
- Some leaders within the Church of England appear to have a very narrow idea about human sexuality and gender variance and in some quarters those who hold different views are discouraged from joining the Church.

We need:

- All Church of England schools to institute formal programmes to prevent and respond to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and offering diversity role models
- Faith communities, festivals and youth gatherings to actively demonstrate that they provide welcoming, accepting and affirming spaces for LGBTI people.
- Schools to ensure curricula present the *range* of theological views as developed by the Theological Resource Group and key educational partners.

We will:

- Commission research amplifying the voices of young LGBTI people of faith and share that research widely with youth faith spaces with recommendations for actions.
- Identify best practice and share those examples with wider communities.
- Resource and equip youth workers, school chaplains and others to work with young people on issues relating to sexuality and gender.

LIVING

3. A rigorous affirmation that the rites of baptism, confirmation, holy communion and funerals should not be denied to anyone on the grounds of their own or others' sexuality or gender identity.

The House of Bishops has already stated that Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion and funerals should not be denied to anyone on the grounds of sexuality or gender identity. However, there have been an increasing number of reported cases of LGBTI people being refused these rites. Several same-sex couples have reported that their local church has refused to baptise their child on the grounds that the priest responsible has not accepted that they are the parents of the child.

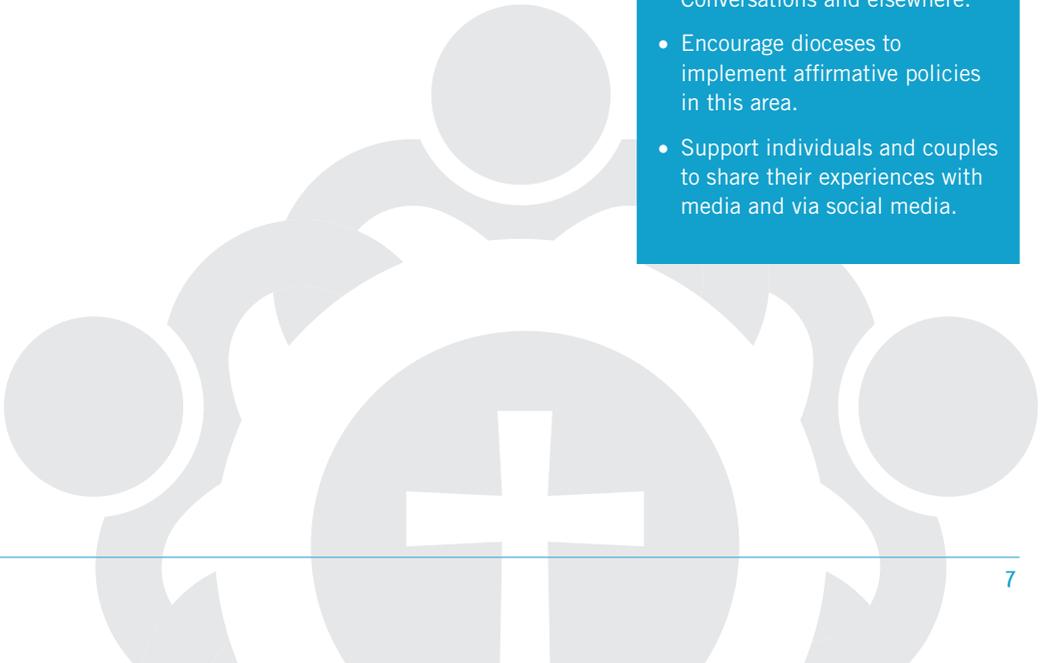
The position of the Church of England on matters of human sexuality – that marriage can only be between a man and a woman – and gender complementarity – should not impact on other rites and the denial of those rites because of sexual orientation or gender identity is unacceptable.. At the very least, arrangements must be made to ensure that nobody is turned away.

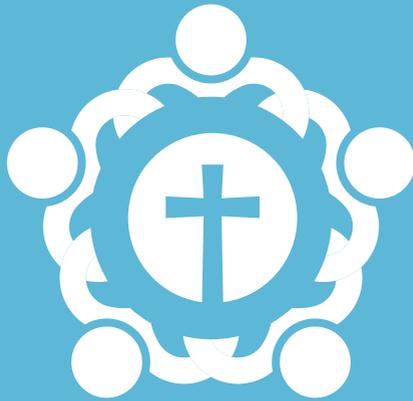
We need:

- Bishops to reiterate and affirm in public statements that the Church of England will not deny any person access to these rites because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Bishops to reaffirm to clergy that the denial of these rites is not acceptable, and that where they are unable in conscience to act themselves, they must arrange for another person to do so.

We will:

- Raise the issue of the denial of rites in the Shared Conversations and elsewhere.
- Encourage dioceses to implement affirmative policies in this area.
- Support individuals and couples to share their experiences with media and via social media.





LOVING

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4. Publication of devotional prayers and other materials for LGBTI people, and endorsement by the Church of England

Prayer and liturgy can be tremendously powerful in giving shape and voice to people's profound experiences of God. LGBTI people often feel marginalised within the life of the church, and that the significant events and milestones in their lives, or their times of pastoral need, are not appropriately supported by the rites offered by the Christian churches. Many have chosen to create their own prayers and liturgies, but the authorisation of those prayers and liturgies by the Church would be a powerful symbol of welcome and acceptance to LGBTI people.

There are many occasions where existing liturgy doesn't allow families to acknowledge gender identity or sexual orientation. For example, could a person who transitions receive a new baptism certificate with some sort of ceremony to accompany that? We want the Church, in its worship, to recognise and value who you are because God recognises and values who you are.

We need:

- The Church of England to endorse a range of prayers and liturgies, which reflect and celebrate the lives and loves of LGBTI people.

We will:

- Establish a group to develop prayers and liturgies which reflect LGBTI experiences.
- Seek a publisher to produce the prayers and liturgies.
- Work with the Church to provide commended prayers and liturgies for LGBTI people.



LOVING

5. Liturgical materials for use in church after civil partnerships, the marriage of same-sex couples, and to affirm change of name and welcome after gender transition

Faithful Anglicans, lay and ordained, are entering into civil partnerships and same sex marriages, but we have no way to recognise this liturgically. Lay Anglicans can and do form faithful and stable same-sex relationships and this is a legitimate choice of conscience but there is no rite to celebrate it. This is, of course, discriminatory but crucially it is anti-missional. Same-sex couples are encouraged to celebrate this important event without prayer and church. This encourages clergy to either devise liturgies themselves or to discourage same-sex couples from seeking support from their church. Same-sex couples who meet uncertainty and ambivalence from clergy feel unnecessarily rejected by the Church.

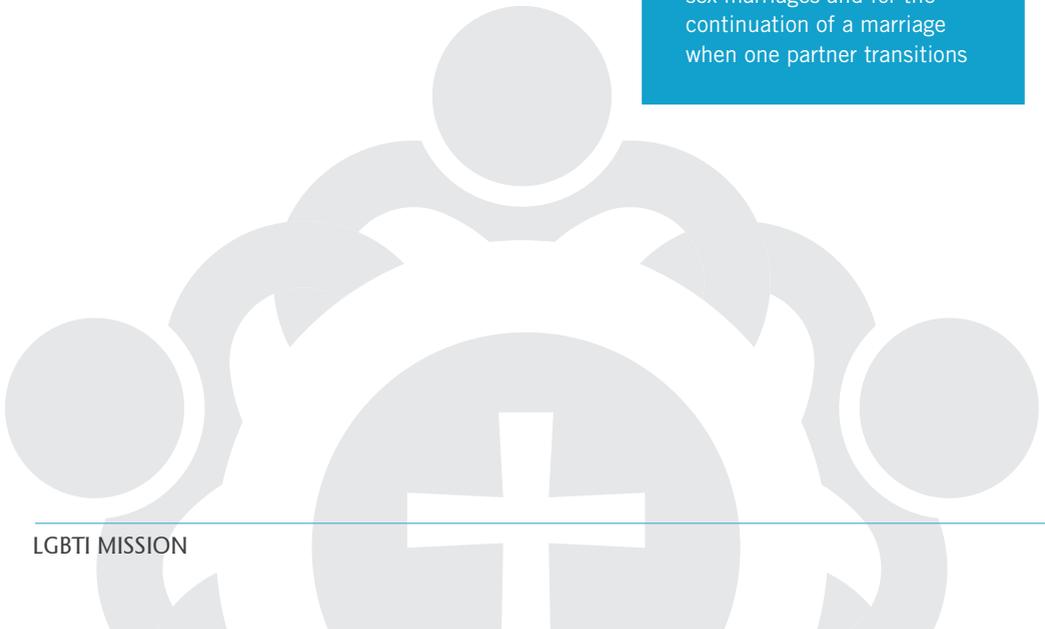
At the very least, the Church of England could define what is and is not possible. A commended dedication and prayer service would enable clergy to avoid acting contrary to authorised rites. Same-sex and gender-variant couples would then have some way to acknowledge and celebrate this important life event in the eyes of their God.

We need:

- An official service of dedication and prayer in Common Worship available for those clergy who wish to use it
- Clear guidance given to clergy about what they can and cannot do.

We will:

- Publish and circulate a draft of an official service
- Seek commercial publication of the liturgical texts within a year
- Ask the House of Bishops to commend prayers and services of dedication after civil partnerships and same-sex marriages and for the continuation of a marriage when one partner transitions



LOVING

6. Parishes that wish to do so should be able to celebrate same-sex marriages and to mark the continuation of a marriage when a partner transitions gender

Many Church of England clergy and congregations would like to be able to celebrate the marriages of same-sex couples but this is not currently permitted by canon law or reflected in authorised liturgies. Despite acknowledging a range of views on other matters, such as women bishops, there is no space for differences when it comes to same-sex marriage. The official view is that marriage is only possible between a man and a woman whose relationship is described as one of gender complementarity.

The *Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013* enables same-sex couples in England and Wales to marry. Religious organisations that wish to can opt in to performing such ceremonies, but they cannot be forced to do so. As the Government stated:

‘A religious marriage ceremony of a same-sex couple will only be possible if:

- the governing body of the religious organisation has opted in by giving explicit consent to same-sex marriages
- the individual minister is willing to conduct the marriage
- if it takes place in a place of worship, those premises have been registered for marriages of same-sex couples’

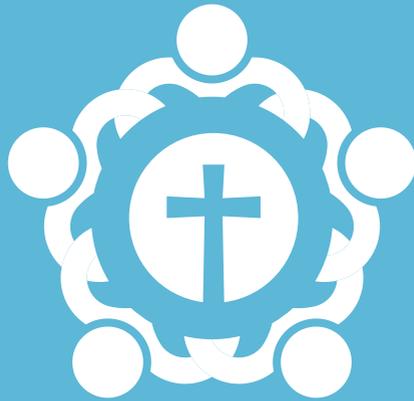
In order for clergy to be able to conduct same-sex marriages, General Synod would have to decide to give ministers discretion to do so. A fundamental strength of the Church of England rests on its ability to live together in unity with those differences. The Church needs to recognise that there is a substantial diversity of opinion on this issue among both clergy and laity.

We need:

- Clergy and parishes to be able to act in line with their own theological perspective, as with divorced couples, women bishops, and celebrate same-sex marriages if they want to.
- The General Synod to bring forward legislation that will enable those clergy who want to celebrate same-sex marriages to be able to do so, while protecting the legal rights of clergy who are conscientiously opposed.

We will:

- Produce documents about the benefits of opening up marriage to same-sex couples.
- Ensure that recommendations are made to the General Synod that enable clergy to act in line with their conscience.
- Raise awareness amongst the general public via campaigns about the benefits of opening up marriage



SERVING

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7. Allow those in same-sex marriages to enter the ordination process

The House of Bishops in its Pastoral Statement of February 2014, without any consultation with the wider Church, imposed a ban on any married gay or lesbian person from being considered for ordination. This act of discrimination imposes an additional criterion for selection before any consideration of the call of the individual and their suitability for ordination. The published Selection Criteria alone should be sufficient to enable the individual and selectors to explore together a calling to authorised ministry.

The possibility of marriage has transformed the landscape of relationships for younger gay and lesbian people and that is as true for Christians as it is for any gay or lesbian person. Many are finding in their committed relationships a vocation from God to faithfulness, integrity and maturity that mirror the call to the commitment in the ordained ministry. In recent years the Church has benefitted from the skills and abilities of many 'late vocations' and the Church itself notes 'candidates who are over 30 often come to the selection process with considerable life experience'. Many of them will come with established relationships and increasingly, if they are LGBTI, they will come with husbands and wives.

The decision of the bishops to rule out any married gay and lesbian Christians from consideration is both an injustice to the individual and to the wider Church at a time when the Bishops are themselves calling for an increase in the number of vocations and ordinations. The individual's vocation to their spouse will be as real as any call to ordination, and the Church is likewise inhibited as it seeks prayerfully to discern the right candidates called by God to serve the people of God.

This official discrimination is forcing potential ordinands to make choices about their most important relationships, to either deny them or their sense of call from God, or worse to lie about their future intentions.

We need:

- The House of Bishops to retract their ban on married gay and lesbian people from being considered for ordination
- For gay and lesbian and transgender candidates to be considered for ordination on the basis of the same criteria as straight candidates.

We will:

- Campaign against the imposition of this form of open discrimination
- Support those whose vocations to the ordained ministry and to marriage are being denied by the Church and highlight the injustice of the current situation.
- Support those within the ministry of the Church who choose to marry after ordination and who experience discrimination as a consequence.

SERVING

8. Revoke all diocesan policies that discriminate against LGBTI ordinands

Individuals who feel called to ordained (or other authorised) ministry naturally include LGBTI people. Each such person then has to have that vocation tested. For ordination several rigorous stages and numerous people are involved:

- The **Priest** who initially encourages a candidate to begin their journey
- A **Diocesan Director of Ordinands** and their staff who play a key role in deciding whether to send a candidate to a national **Bishops' Advisory Panel** which makes a recommendation to the **Diocesan Bishop** who then personally decides whether or not a candidate should be sent for training

There are wide variations in practice between dioceses in dealing with LGBTI people. The most important role is that of the Diocesan Bishop, and some refuse to allow any openly LGBTI person to appear before a Bishops' Advisory Panel.

Furthermore, *all* candidates are asked to give assent to a standard of sexual behaviour contained in the 1991 document *Issues in Human Sexuality*. We understand this document was never meant to become policy but is now used to make all candidates agree to a very prescriptive and narrow orthodoxy. As a result LGBTI candidates (and others) are often encouraged to lie or pretend they assent when they don't.

Compulsory acceptance of this document and inconsistencies between dioceses are blocking and preventing ministry.

We need:

- A national policy that ensures candidates for all forms of authorised ministry are considered on their merits, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- An end to all other forms of discrimination against LGBTI ordinands and readers in training
- The House of Bishops to remove assent to *Issues of Human Sexuality* as a pre-condition to selection for training.

We will:

- Evaluate current selection practices across the dioceses and publish our findings.
- Identify dioceses which are enabling LGBTI ministry and share best practice with other bishops.
- Work with all Theological Education Institutions to support LGBTI ordinands, hear their stories, provide them with role models, and celebrate their progress through ordination into ministry.

SERVING

9. Establish national policy that marital status is not to be a barrier in any appointment to authorised ministry, including lay ministry and episcopacy

National Church of England policy states that the marital status of a heterosexual member of the clergy is not to be taken into account in authorised ministry appointments, whether it is a civil or religious marriage. In February 2014 the House of Bishops issued a 'pastoral letter' that seemed to forbid same-sex couples in civil marriages from being appointed to ministry positions. The letter stated:

27. The House is not, therefore, willing for those who are in a same sex marriage to be ordained to any of the three orders of ministry. In addition it considers that it would not be appropriate conduct for someone in holy orders to enter into a same sex marriage, given the need for clergy to model the Church's teaching in their lives.

Provision was also made via the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act for an addition to the Equality Act 2010. It states a religious exemption can be claimed if there is a genuine requirement that a potential member of staff is not married to someone of the same sex.

No clergy have yet been removed from current positions. There does, however, appear to be a bar in some places on attempts to move jobs. Bishops have taken three types of action against clergy (and even against a lay Reader) in same-sex civil marriages:

- Written admonition from bishops, placed on file
- Refusal to issue a license when seeking a new position, even in a secular organisation
- Removal of Permission to Officiate

It is not clear whether these policies are legally enforceable under canon law but they are certainly being implemented against clergy in civil same-sex marriages. Similarly, clergy who have transitioned have been asked to surrender their licence, or to step down from their post. Even when they have experienced acceptance by the Church moving to another post at a later date has been problematic.

We need:

- A statement from the House of Bishops that marital status is not a bar to appointments.
- Approval by General Synod of the policy that all appointments should be made without discrimination as to marital status, sexual orientation or gender identity, except to accommodate the local theological convictions of parishes and clergy.

We will:

- Consult legal experts to establish the validity of the current policy position.
- Work with Bishops and in General Synod to develop revised policies
- Raise concerns in Westminster about the reach and scope of the current religious exemptions in civil law.



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T: 07906445695 | E: LGBTIMission@gmail.com

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