

#### 4. Questions on Human Sexuality:

- 4.1. The Pilling Report on Human Sexuality recommended that churches, when approved by the PCC and the incumbent, should have the possibility of offering services of blessing for same-sex marriages. What are your feelings on this?
- 4.2. I should like to ask each candidate's their personal view on single sex marriage.
- 4.3. What are your hopes and prayers for the current programme of Shared Conversations around Human Sexuality?
- 4.4. Many people believe that the Church holds an unethical position on LGBTI issues. How would you vote on giving support to equal marriage and allowing same sex marriage in church?

There are good things in the Report. For a start, it is unquestionably right to say that "the Church should repent for the homophobic attitudes it has sometimes failed to rebuke and should stand firmly against it whenever it is to be found." It is also correct to have it in the report that "No one should be accused of homophobia solely for articulating traditional Christian teaching on same sex relationships." I would also want to say that the Pilling Report contains a brilliant and gutsy "dissenting statement" from the Bishop of Birkenhead, Keith Sinclair. In it, he sketches the biblical teaching which he affirms is clear, and warns that the route of the main Report will be to lead the Church into a "cultural captivity" that can only "weaken our commitment to God's mission but also further damage the unity of the church." Bishop Keith is to be applauded for his bold statement of orthodoxy. Therefore I do not support the offering of same sex services in the Church of England. **(Peter Breckwoldt)**

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4.1 I think some such formula as this, where individual churches are able to decide whether they are ready and willing to offer this ministry, is probably the way forward.

4.2 I find this a hugely complex area. Within the Christian tradition marriage has been freighted with many meanings of which a loving commitment between two individuals is only one. I want the Church to be able to celebrate and solemnise the relationships of same sex couples in an equally affirming way. I believe that more work is needed on how this should be articulated both theologically and liturgically.

4.3 The Shared Conversations are unlikely to change minds but my hope is that they will be instrumental in building relationships of greater respect and trust between those who hold opposing views on this issue.

4.4 In principle I would hope to support a step in this direction but my vote would depend on the content and detail of any motion that comes before the Synod.  
**(Jane Charman)**

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4.1 In reading the Pilling Report I do not agree that it suggests anything about blessings for the present, but further dialogue and conversations on the issue of Human Sexuality.

4.2 Single sex marriage is an oxymoron as the Church perceives it at the moment.

4.3 The continued shared conversations are always a help when trying to understand an alternative view from all parties involved. Such a complicated pastoral matter as human sexuality will need an answer even if the answer is not popular or held by a minority. And we

need to remember that those involved in the conversations or who are facilitating the groups do not have any authority to make any decisions.

4.4 I don't think it is "many people" who believe the church is holding an unethical position. I believe it is a small minority who are hurting and need an answer to a position they find themselves in. The ethical issue is that the Church of England offers a consistent position across the board when it comes to sexuality & relationship issues. I follow the present doctrine of the Church of England is that marriage is for male and female. Anything outside of that cannot be regarded as marriage. So often the culture of the world outside the church is looking for an alternative culture – a counter culture. Therefore I think the church needs to draw a line and offer an alternative answer to some of these important pastoral issues. Maybe too often in the past we have compromised thinking in order to be pastorally sensitive, when actually the world would like us to offer firmer and stronger moral guidelines. I believe the Church of England should hold an alternative position to the present cultural norm, so that it remains distinctive and radical. **(Tim Gomm)**

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I firmly believe that 'same sex marriage' is a misnomer. For Christian and non-Christian alike, marriage is, and has for centuries been understood as, a union between a man and a woman. This does not mean that I am either homophobic or intolerant of lesbians or gays. Two of our children had gay Godparents. The Church is, and must continue to be, a welcoming community to all. With regard to the Shared Conversations, I pray that they are undertaken in a spirit of honesty, generosity and love and without rancour or bitterness. I would look for neither side to 'win', but for both to 'understand'. **(John Hawthorne)**

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4.1 I would be supportive of local incumbents and PCCs having the opportunity of responding to requests for a service of blessing of a same-sex marriage. As with marriages of persons who have a former spouse still living, guidelines for pastoral care and the preparation of couples for a service of blessing will be helpful and set proper support for clergy and PCCs, together with the couple concerned.

4.2 Same sex marriage is now recognised as a legal status within the law of our land. I very much regret that as a Church we have not been able to engage with the subject in an open and constructive manner. The four-way lock preventing the Church of England considering offering a service of marriage for same-sex couples demonstrated the lack of confidence from the Government in our ability to have these conversations. I hope that we will, in time, be able to have these conversations and come to a decision which will allow the marriage of same-sex couples in church.

4.3 One of the learned outcomes from our debates and forming the legislation to ordain women as Bishops, was the discipline and practice of sitting together, praying together, and speaking and listening together as a General Synod. The adversarial debate in the Synod was an unholy mechanism of stating differences of opinion. The Shared Conversations are allowing a number of persons the opportunity of contributing to a deeper understanding of who we are as human beings, all created by God, and loved by God. My hopes and prayers are that this listening and learning process will build up our capacity for living with difference in a holy respect for all.

4.4 I would support a debate and I am likely to vote in favour of equal marriage, now that this is legal in our country. As stated above, as a Church we need to understand how a sacramental relationship between two people, in a lifelong commitment, can receive a blessing from God when requested. The Church's doctrinal understanding of what marriage means should be subject to review by the Faith and Order Commission, in light of the changes in secular marriage law. **(Alan Jeans)**

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4.1 As I made quite clear in my election address, I support the church's historic teaching on marriage. As a matter of equality, I am in favour of Civil Partnerships between same-sex couples, but I believe marriage is between one man and one woman.

4.2 As I made quite clear in my election address, I support the church's historic teaching on marriage.

4.3 My hope and prayer is that each person will be listened to respectfully to what I'm sure will be diverse opinions, particularly when it comes to interpretation of scripture.

4.4 If asked to vote today, I would not support equal marriage but pursue equality through civil partnership choices. **(Chris Tebbutt)**

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4.1 Though I have a degree of sympathy for my colleagues who may find themselves being asked to perform services of blessings for same-sex marriage, at present this is something that I struggle with. This is a hugely sensitive and complex matter that for me isn't as simple as supporting or disagreeing with such services.

4.2 This is a significant and complex issue, which I have not come to a settled mind on. I support the traditional teaching of the Church in regard to marriage but recognize that the cultural sands are shifting & there is a need for a grown up discussion around the theology and ethics of marriage, relationships and sexuality. At the same time I also feel a real sense of empathy for those in same-sex relationships who wish to see their relationship and love being affirmed and accepted by the Church, yet at present may feel "rejected" by the Church. The current situation feels unsatisfactory and General Synod must use its time wisely in creating the right environment to enable grace-filled discussion and debate to take place if we are to find appropriate spiritual and pastoral resolutions.

4.3 It is my hope and prayer the current programme of Shared Conversation will enable the Church to find a way of listening to a number of diverse voices, views and opinions that will ultimately enable the Church to grow and life in Christ to flourish for all believers irrespective of their gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. However, this will need a genuine commitment by those engaged in the conversation to listen & hear the stories of others and be willing to have their own views challenged & minds opened to hear the voice of God and discern His heart for the Church in the stories of those participating in the conversation.

4.4 I sincerely hope that I would listen to the debate and engage in discussion and prayer with people from different perspectives and remain open hearted. However, at present I remain uncomfortable with the idea of same-sex couples marrying in church. I also believe it is important that we are able to offer strong protection for those ministers who felt in all good conscience unable to officiate in such services should same-sex marriage become possible within the Church of England. **(Jonathan Triffitt)**

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4.1 Archbishop Justin reminds us it is possible to disagree over something but still recognize the goodness in each other's view. I look forward to having the conversation with the members of our PCCs.

4.2 I am convinced that people do not choose their sexual orientation. The Shared Conversations that are underway will offer the new General Synod holy ground and important insights; enabling us to respect our diversity.

4.3 My prayer is that we will listen and hear God through each other. As one invited to take part in the Shared Conversations I expect to listen to the views being expressed and in turn I hope to be heard.

4.4 Society seems ambivalent about sexual orientation, while in law the situation is almost resolved. The Church needs to create a liturgy that honours faithful and loving same sex relationships. **(Thomas Woodhouse)**