

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?**

As Government ministers have indicated, personal views/feelings on some matters are not for public publication.

The 'Conversations' on the subjects being questioned are at an extremely delicate stage, both for individuals directly affected by them but also relations between the Government and the Church of England. At this stage it is a listening process and throwaway comments in the form of feelings and saying in advance how a person may vote are in my view unhelpful.

In one sense and from a General Synod aspect, this is largely a clergy matter because they as Registrars will be called upon to enact any change in legislation.

Having said that, it is no simple single issue but the criteria settled to decide it are likely to impact upon other forms of relationship that are currently the interest of pressure groups. These would include the following. The maximum number of people thought to be appropriate within a marriage, five is being considered. Changing the C of E Table of Kindred and Affinity, not just to provide for people of the same gender but to 'modernise' those of opposite gender who are currently prohibited from marrying. To lower the Age of Consent on the grounds that it would normalise intimate relations that already happen amongst so many below this age. These three alone would see a 'loving relationship' to be a justifiable criteria for a change in the law.

(Paul Boyd-Lee)

I shall attempt to respond to these questions as a single, multi-faceted question regarding human sexuality. I am fully committed to welcoming and affirming the voices of those who may feel disenfranchised by the Church, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, wealth, sexual orientation or disability. I will not shy away from my support of same-sex marriage, as I believe that this is a basic human right and equally as legitimate an expression of love and commitment as 'traditional' marriage. To quote the Bishop of Salisbury, Nick Holtam, in Stonewall's latest publication on Christian Role Models for LGBT equality: *'There seems to me a pattern in the Gospels that it's the outsider who often teaches us the meaning of what we thought was an insider's story, and that's been my experience of Christian life. In 'The Good Samaritan', it's the outsider who teaches us the real meaning of the law. To exclude LGBT people as outsiders therefore damages the Church. The person different to you can be the person who brings the gift you most need'*.

I do not believe that the Church's position on LGBTI issues is 'unethical', as I am sure that for those who struggle with these issues it does come from a position of ethics, I just happen to believe that it is not our position to judge one another, as only God can do this. It is our job to

love one another as Jesus Christ loved us. If we start from a position of love then those who identify as LGBTI and indeed all those who do not feel they fit in to the 'normal' of the Church can not only feel welcomed but ultimately loved and valued.

In terms of Shared Conversations, I have been invited by the Bishop of Salisbury to participate in these discussions. I thus hope and pray for an honest dialogue, for all those in attendance to participate without predetermined agendas but instead with a predetermined focus on love and compassion. In these discussions it is important that we as a Church remember that we are not dealing with trivial matters, but instead people's lives and people's relationship with God as facilitated by Church of England worship. Thus I hope and pray for an all-round commitment to discussion but not judgment. **(Fenella Cannings-Jurd)**

4.1 I would be delighted to see blessings in church of same sex marriages which would affirm their lifelong commitment to each other.

4.2 My view on same sex marriage is that it is a testament to a couple wanting to have a lifelong and faithful relationship in which a public service shows their commitment. I do not see how same sex marriage in any way detracts from heterosexual marriage. It does not pose a threat to the institution of marriage in any way. People will always want to marry and all are now free to do so although not all in churches as yet. This is not impinging on anybody's liberties.

4.3 I am a little pessimistic about how influential the Shared Conversations will be. However it is a good starting point and supports Justin Welby's ethos of 'good disagreement'. Having just such conversations went a long way to resolving the Women Bishops' legislation. However I think it would be a big mistake if the matter of human sexuality were to be debated in the chamber. This has to be dealt with carefully and sensitively and allow all voices to be heard (which certainly would not happen in any debate). My prayer is that the Church of England may come to a common understanding about our sexuality not least for those Christians who are not heterosexual and many of whom do not feel welcome or who cannot be open about their sexual orientation.

4.4 I must admit I am puzzled about the Church's stance. The bishops are instructed to discipline those clergy who have open gay relationships/marriages but all is ok for the laity. Although the recent case of a Reader in a gay relationship having his licence revoked seems an anomaly. Clarity is urgently needed. I do think the current position of the church on these matters is untenable at best and hypocritical at worst. I regret that same sex marriage in church will probably not happen in my lifetime (but you never know). **(Christine Corteen)**

I think we need to redefine terms here. I believe the 'ideal' 'marriage' is the relationship between a man and a woman in which they may produce and raise their children in a stable environment. This has proved to be the successful foundation of society in most cultures throughout history. It is applauded by many secular sociologists and anthropologists as the very best way to raise children. This is what the church refers to as 'Holy' matrimony and what Jesus teaches when he advocates 'a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh' (Matthew 19 v 5)

Men and women are very different; but as a couple, the whole of human characteristics are blended together. I know many same sex couples have very committed and loving relationships but because they can't 'make' their own children and because they are lacking one set of human characteristics in their partnership, it is different.

In a vote, I would vote against 'same sex' 'marriage' as I wish to promote, what I believe, is the very best kind of relationship.

It could be that the Church is holding an unethical position on this topic, but as a church we are called to be different from society. A 'Holy' people. Pope Francis seems to be very popular for holding similar unethical positions, I'm sure the Church of England could do the same.

(Gill de Berry)

I feel that Christian marriage should be between a man and a woman but I fully support same sex civil partnerships and equal rights. **(Richard Jones)**

For those directly involved, the spectrum of LGBTI are very important and, like other issues, they need to be addressed. However, considering the array of ongoing issues facing the Church and the world today I sense LGBTI may well be being pushed up the agenda by pressure groups and the media; which at times seems to enjoy exploiting any apparent discomfort or potential discord within the Church. In other words, if you have a broken arm it is most important that it is treated, however, if you also have a severed artery the arm does move down the scale of priorities.

To answer specific points: if a PCC and the incumbent are comfortable with blessing a civil same sex marriage, I accept this. If, however, asked to vote today on whether same sex marriages should be conducted by the Church I would vote no. But as a General Synod representative it would be my responsibility to listen to the discussions, refer to scripture and ask for God's guidance so as to assure myself that my position is firmly based on God's view of the world and not on long term custom and practice with which I/we grew up. We also need to be careful when responding to current cultural pressures and not over react. For my part I intend to "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." **(Keith Leslie)**

As I said in my election address, I do not have a fixed position on the various questions that arise in relation to same-sex relationships. I do, however, believe that the overriding consideration is that we manifest the love of God in all our discussions, decisions and behavior.

Answer to Q4.1 According to the Report it is not clear that it would be possible to offer services of blessing for same-sex marriages (see Recommendation 16, p151). Further, the Report points out that an approved liturgy for the celebration of same-sex marriages would 'put the cart before the horse'. It may be that we should do just that. But the consequences would

be significant for one of the things that defines the Church of England is its liturgy. While I feel we must proceed cautiously I also feel that the Church should find ways of recognizing and praying for same sex couples as soon as possible as the Report recommends (see para 387).

Answers to 4.2 and 4.3

As I said in my election address, I do not have a fixed position on the various questions that arise in relation to same-sex relationships.

I have read the Pilling Report, various papers produced by interest groups across the spectrum and discussed the questions with people holding different views. I will be participating in the Regional facilitated conversations on behalf of the Diocese of Salisbury. I believe that my experience of teaching scriptural interpretation to lay people who often come to the question with fixed but usually quite different views on what the scriptures have to say will enable me to contribute to the conversations and, if re-elected, at General Synod

My hopes and prayers for the Shared Conversations are that

- God will guide our thinking and our study of scripture,
- there will be many people like me who are there to listen and learn
- all of those who participate are willing to be changed in heart and mind
- if the outcome is that opinions continue to differ we will have mutual respect and regard for those who take a different stance.

4.4 There are many different questions and issues that might be brought under the LGBTI umbrella. I do not, however, believe that the Church's current position on the questions canvassed in the Pilling Report can be regarded as 'unethical'. As to how I would vote, it would depend on the precise question being polled. **(Debbie McIsaac)**

I was brought up to believe in the sanctity of Holy matrimony between a man and woman, this I still hold to be true, however I feel that the laws regarding same sex relations has been a great step forward, being no longer a criminal offence and the civil partnership act a legal and binding document. Accordingly I feel this is sufficient. **(Doreen Riley)**

4.1 I am in favour.

4.2 I have no objection.

4.3 That a fair and tolerant resolution is reached.

4.4 I would vote in favour. **(Paul Taylor)**