



The Bishop of Norwich
The Rt Revd Graham Usher

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Norwich

20th January 2023

Dear friends in Christ,

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in them.

We are writing to you on the day that the House of Bishops is publishing its response to *Living in Love and Faith*, including a [letter from the bishops](#) and [draft Prayers of Love and Faith](#). All three of us voted in favour of these documents at the College of Bishops, believing them to be a realistic step on a journey. The documents received almost unanimous support from across the theological spectrum of bishops.

We commend the published documents to you. We encourage you to take time to study them and see their creative possibilities. We believe this will be time well spent as the detail is important and these matters are inevitably more nuanced than media headlines. In this, it's important to bear in mind that the consensus was not achieved among the bishops without difficulty, nor without some concessions on all sides, given the diverse views represented.

We treasure and value the contribution that LGBTI+ clergy and laity make to our life together in the diocese. We join the full apology to LGBTI+ people in the bishops' letter and will carry on seeking the justice of God's kingdom.

We continue to affirm the gifts of Holy Matrimony, singleness and celibacy within the Christian tradition, whilst also believing that the Holy Spirit has been at work in enabling the Church of England to have a much richer, open and honest conversation about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage through the *Living in Love and Faith* process. We recognise that the Holy Spirit has enabled something remarkable to happen during these last six years. We too have learnt much and grown in our understanding.

We are grateful to all who took part in the *Living in Love and Faith* course and those who have thought and prayed about these aspects of what it is to be human. We recognise that many LGBTI+ people took great risks in sharing their stories and we thank them for their courage and honesty. We are aware that both those who look forward to affirming same-sex relationships in church, and those who cannot do this, have concerns about the

way ahead. What the bishops are offering is the result of much discernment, attending to God in prayer and the study of the scriptures, as well as listening to the views of many people across the Church and beyond. We would ask that we all go into the future in the same spirit of prayer and discernment, speaking well of one another in private and in public.

The draft *Prayers of Love and Faith* will go to the General Synod in February. After Synod's feedback, the House of Bishops will commend prayers to support clergy with the wide variety of ministerial and pastoral requests that come our way. The draft prayers do not change the Church of England's doctrine of marriage. We trust that those who choose to use them will do so following sensitive pastoral conversations with a couple and in accordance with their own consciences.

We acknowledge that there will be those for whom these resources go too far, and others for whom they do not go far enough. There will be some unanswered questions, many of which will be addressed in the Pastoral Guidance to be developed over the coming few months. As your bishops, our commitment is to have a care and concern for you all, irrespective of where your conscience leads you on these issues, as we seek to live our life together in the diocese.

Please be assured of our continued prayers in love and faith and hope as we all read and reflect on the material published today.

Yours sincerely



+Jane Lynn



+Graham Norvic:



+Alan Thetford