



Briefing Paper for OneBodyOneFaith Members and Supporters

Writing to C of E General Synod representatives

The vote **not** to take note of GS 2055 was a watershed. It disrupted the smooth management of how bishops of the Church of England wanted to handle matters relating to sexuality and gender. It represented people power.

Now the bishops are concerned to regain control of the process. They are meeting with their synod representatives. Among the things they are likely to say are:

- The voting was very close and in fact a simple majority voted for GS 2055
- We bishops have to present a united front because we are a focus of unity
- This is all very difficult, balancing two strongly opposed views
- We have to move cautiously so as not to upset anyone

These are understandable responses, but they are not good answers. You need to give the Synod representatives for your diocese these answers to the things that bishops are likely to say:

- The closeness of the vote shows that half the clergy and laity were sufficiently unhappy to vote against the report. This is hugely significant and very unusual. They need to take note of that
- The road map proposed was not acceptable to at least half the synod. Remember many in the middle will have voted for it out of a sense of loyalty, not because they thought what the bishops proposed was good
- The bishops' false show of unity helps no one. They can honestly hold to the discipline of the church while expressing their own views about what they would like to see happen and the direction they wish to see the church take (Bishop Stephen Cottrell of Chelmsford started to do this in his diocesan synod presidential address on Saturday - read [here](#))
- The church is not split into two equally opposing views. Read Archdeacon Nicki Groarke's speech to see where many people in the middle of the church are - available [here](#)
- The present teaching and discipline is hurting many people. The status quo is damaging LGBTI+ people's lives, and those of our families and allies. Not being an inclusive and diverse church is bad for young people, ordinands, readers, clergy, everyone in our churches and the mission of the church

With these responses, your representatives may be empowered to continue to represent to our bishops the need for the "radical new Christian inclusion" that the Archbishops have called for. The kind of things that the bishops need to be doing now to bring that about are listed below. With all this in mind:

- Write as soon as you can to the representatives of the diocese in which you live.
- Their addresses can be found [here](#)

- Thank them for their work and for reading your letter
- Explain that you were glad that GS 2055 will go no further
- Set the context, as you see it, using material on the front of this briefing
- Say that you understand that they are meeting their bishop soon
- Encourage them to be definite in asking their bishop for forward movement
- Ask them to bring to that meeting the following suggestions and proposals about the way forward:
 - For an explicit acceptance of the integrity of theological diversity over matters of sexuality - that it is possible to be Biblically faithful and hold different positions - and asking them to create systems to assure that this is honoured in their dioceses
 - We are not wanting to impose one view but to allow different views to be held honourably in the Church of England
 - A significant level of LGBTI+ representation on national and diocesan boards and councils to ensure that we are not treated as a problem or talked about without being in the room
 - To appoint a national lead for LGBTI+ matters, and for dioceses to appoint diocesan LGBTI+ leads
 - Work in dioceses to help move towards a radical new Christian inclusion that makes all churches and church institutions (schools, youth clubs, chaplaincies) safe for everyone regardless of sexuality - making places where people feel safety is key
 - Development of resources to help parishes where the conversations and listening about sexuality and gender have not yet happened
 - To make it possible for clergy to offer “a form of service celebrating the relationship between two people of the same sex” (legally possible according to Annex 1.8.c.ii of GS2055)
 - To stop disciplining clergy, readers and ordinands for contracting civil same-sex marriages by adopting paragraph Annex 1.13.d of GS2055
 - To ensure that support for transgender and intersex people is included in diocesan plans

You may wish to choose to highlight some or all of these to recommend in your letter
If you need the text of GS 2055 to understand the specific bullet points above you can find it [here](#)

Please write as soon as you can - your letters will:

- make LGBTI+ voices and the voices of our allies heard
- help empower Synod representatives to keep pushing for change
- help bring about the changes we know are right.

Thank you!

PS Please send copies of anything you write to hello@onebodyonefaith.org.uk - Thanks!

14th March 2017