

GENERAL SYNOD 2017

Motion No.12: Human Sexuality

Proposer: Dr Leo Kilroy

**Embargoed Against Delivery
Check Against Delivery**

Your Grace and members of Synod,

My name is Leo Kilroy from the Diocese of Glendalough and I am proposing Motion 12 for consideration by this Synod. It is a private members' motion, in my own name and seconded by the Rev. Brian O'Rourke.

Human sexuality has been debated by the General Synod for a long number of years. A diverse range of opinion remains, most particularly regarding lesbian and gay people who live in loving and committed relationships. We have had numerous conferences, listening exercises and select committees. Biblical scholars have offered opinion on both sides of the debate. This motion recognises that a diversity of principled conviction remains, but it also places the importance of church unity at the forefront.

I have long accepted that we will not all agree on this matter, but let us allow the Holy Spirit, to lead us to a way forward, that makes it possible for us to worship within the same Church without acrimony and alienation.

I know that most people in this room are not at either polar end in the debate. You are the people in the middle of the Church, who are getting tired of debating this matter and you want to see a way forward. One of the strengths of Anglicanism is its ability to support a variety of traditions and accommodate difference of opinion on many matters. Human sexuality can be just another of those things that we agree to differ on.

Many of your brothers and sisters in our Church are lesbian and gay. They are people that you meet at Church every Sunday, ordinary people living ordinary lives; some are single and some are in committed, loving relationships. Advances in civic society in recent years have seen LGBT people enjoy greater rights and legal protections, including, frameworks for legal union. But many lesbian and gay people continue feel gravely hurt by this Church. They have been injured by the lack of compassion shown by some, who cling to a small number of disparate and disputed verses that exist in pockets of the Bible, and claim a divine rejection of

gay people. While there is no evidence in the Gospels that Jesus Christ said anything one way or another about gay people, there are, however, plenty of examples of how Jesus modelled for us the need to love and include all. In the Bible we see His loathing for stigmatisation.

This is evident in the ways that He sits beside, touches and is touched by people whose race, occupation, economic means and states of mental and physical health made them the objects of mockery and scorn. Lesbian and gay people are amongst today's examples of people on the fringes. We need to ask ourselves, how would Jesus treat them in this day and age?

As a younger gay man, I struggled to accept my sexual orientation and God's will for me. Much of that struggle was down to the rejection and stigmatisation by other Christians. I tried to suppress my sexuality, which only resulted in hurt both to me and to other people in my life. Most of all, it was a rejection of God's wish for me to flourish as a human being.

Ten years ago, I met my partner Tony and today we live in a loving and stable relationship. We are both committed Christians who on a daily basis experience the love of Jesus Christ through each other and through the life that we have built together. Six years ago, we entered into a civil partnership and last year a civil marriage. It was a matter of great upset and sadness to us that we could not celebrate that in a public way in our Church at this key moment in our lives. Across the Church I know of a great many other couples who have felt similar hurt and disappointment. Many of them have chosen to leave the Church or play a peripheral role.

This motion is not asking for marriage in the Church. I understand that many of you hold the Church's definition of marriage dearly. This motion is careful to protect Canon 31 and its definition of marriage. It is simply calling for permission to develop ways to publicly and pastorally support and celebrate with lesbian and gay people at an important point in their lives.

I am appealing to all of you, and particularly those of you in the middle ground of our Church, to vote in favour of this motion or abstain. A yes vote is a vote to urge the House of Bishops to find a way forward for the Church. I trust the twelve people who sit on the bench behind me. I trust them to show leadership on this crucial pastoral matter, while at the same protecting the essential unity of the Church.

Voting yes today is not voting for a change today. It is requesting the House of Bishops to work together and come back to us at next year's Synod with a suggested way forward. There will be a chance for further debate, before we vote to accept or indeed reject any formula that the House of Bishops might propose. Surely this Synod, under God can do no less? I commend this motion to Synod for its consideration.