

HOUSE OF BISHOPS STATEMENT TO GENERAL SYNOD 2018 REGARDING HUMAN SEXUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The General Synod 2013 established a Select Committee on ‘Human Sexuality in the context of Christian Belief’. The brief given to the Select Committee was ‘to enable the listening, dialogue and learning process’ on all issues regarding human sexuality following the resolution of General Synod in 2012. This Committee met for four years and produced an excellent Guide to Human Sexuality that is available to all parishes.

Their work having concluded at General Synod 2017, the issue of Human Sexuality in the context of Christian Belief was passed to the House of Bishops. It was noted that following the production of the Guide to Human Sexuality, there was little appetite to discuss further these issues in parishes. It would seem that there is no consensus in General Synod, the House of Bishops, or in the church island-wide to change the Canons of the Church of Ireland on the matter of marriage. Thus the Church of Ireland marriage service remains unchanged and marriage may be solemnised only between a man and a woman. No liturgy or authorised service is provided therefore for any other situation. As the archbishops and bishops have already made clear to the clergy of the Church of Ireland, it is not possible to proscribe the saying of prayers in personal and pastoral situations, but if clergy are invited to offer prayer after a same sex marriage, any such prayer must remain consonant with the spirit and teaching of the Church of Ireland.

It is widely recognised that there is no simple solution for these and other issues of human sexuality; but with compassion, humility and concern, we offer our continued commitment to attentive listening and to respectful discussion. We ask that all members of Synod who continue to hold strong opinions do so with integrity and compassion, and to also hold in prayer before God the challenging diversity that exists within the Church of Ireland.