

**CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND HUMAN SEXUALITY:
STATEMENT FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS**

I attach for information a copy of a statement that the House of Bishops has issued today on civil partnerships and human sexuality. I also attach a copy of a short accompanying statement from the Bishop of Norwich which has been published with it.

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Church House, Westminster
1 July 2011

Civil Partnerships and Human Sexuality: A Statement from the House of Bishops of the Church of England

It is now nearly six years since the House issued its Pastoral Statement prior to the introduction of civil partnerships in December 2005. The preparation of that document was the last occasion when the House devoted substantial time to the issue of same sex relationships. We undertook to keep that Pastoral Statement under review. We have decided that the time has come for a review to take place.

Over the past five and half years there have been several developments. Consistent with the guidelines in the Pastoral Statement a number of clergy are now in civil partnerships. The General Synod decided to amend the clergy pension scheme to improve the provision for the surviving civil partners of clergy who have died. More recently Parliament has decided that civil partnerships may be registered on religious premises where the relevant religious authority has consented (the necessary regulations are expected this autumn).

The review will need to take account of this changing scene. The Pastoral Statement was not concerned with clergy alone but with the whole people of God. We recognise that bishops and clergy have found ways of engaging pastorally with those in civil partnerships, both at the time of registration and subsequently. Within the Anglican tradition our theological thinking is formed by a reasoned interpretation of Scripture, within the living tradition of the Church informed by pastoral experience. The House believes there is a theological task to be done to clarify further our understanding of the nature and status of these partnerships.

These are the background issues for a review of the 2005 Statement. It will be undertaken in the context of the Church of England's teaching on same sex relations as set out in the General Synod motion of November 1987 and *Issues in Human Sexuality* (a teaching statement from the House of Bishops in 1991). It will also be consistent with the approach taken by the Anglican Communion in Resolution 1.10 of the Lambeth Conference 1998 and subsequently.

Among the matters to be considered in the review of the 2005 Statement there is one of some importance which the House did not address in advance of any experience of civil partnerships. This is whether clergy who have registered civil partnerships should be eligible for nomination to the episcopate. The House has concluded that it would be wrong to pre-empt the outcome of the review and that clergy in civil partnerships should not at present, therefore, be nominated for episcopal appointment. The House's intention is to complete the review, which will need to take account of the legal analysis set out in GS MISC 992, during 2012.

The House has also decided that more work is now needed on the Church of England's approach to human sexuality more generally. In February 2007, the General Synod passed a motion commending "continuing efforts to prevent the diversity of opinion about human sexuality creating further division and impaired fellowship within the Church of England and the Anglican Communion."

Alongside the review of the 2005 Pastoral Statement, the House intends, therefore, to draw together material from the listening process which has been undertaken within

the Church of England over the recent years in the light of the 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution. The House wishes to offer proposals on how the continuing discussion within the Church of England about these matters might best be shaped in the light of the listening process. Our intention is to produce a further consultation document in 2013.

Church House
Westminster

1 July 2011

House of Bishops' statement on Civil Partnerships and Human Sexuality – accompanying statement by the Bishop of Norwich

The House of Bishops today issued a statement about the continuing debate within the Church of England about same-sex relationships. Speaking on behalf of the House the Bishop of Norwich said:

“Contrary to popular perception the House of Bishops has spent very little time over recent years discussing homosexuality. The last substantive engagement with the issue was in 2005 when the House agreed to issue a pastoral statement prepared by a group under my chairmanship on the implications of the introduction of civil partnerships. The House has now agreed that the time has come to commission two new pieces of work.

First it has asked for a review of the 2005 statement in the light of subsequent developments. The review will include examination of whether priests in civil partnerships should be eligible for appointment as bishops. The 2005 statement was silent on this issue and, while the relevant legal background was analysed in a recently published Legal Office note, the House acknowledges its responsibility to address the policy issue. To avoid pre-empting the outcome of the review the House has concluded that clergy in civil partnerships should not, at present, be nominated for episcopal appointment. The review will be completed in 2012.

Secondly, the House has committed itself to a wider look at the Church of England's approach to same-sex relationships more generally in the light of the listening process launched by the Lambeth Conference in 1998. The Bishops will produce a consultation document in 2013. The House's decision is motivated by a desire to help shape the continuing debate constructively and not by any view about what the outcome should be.”

1 July 2011