

The College of Bishops held its first three-day meeting to begin a process of discernment and decision-making about questions of identity, sexuality and marriage.

The College of Bishops of the Church of England has now concluded its previously announced three-day meeting (31 October to Wednesday 2 November) called to begin a process of discernment and decision-making about questions of identity, sexuality and marriage.

Under the banner 'Living in Love and Faith' (LLF), the Church produced a suite of resources in November 2020 about human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. These include a book, a video course, podcasts and videos of the lived experiences of a wide range of individuals. These have been available through a variety of channels across the Church including websites and local parishes.

Since then, the Church has been encouraging churchgoers from across the country to take part in a process of learning using the resources, listening to one another and to God. A report of the gathered responses from this churchwide engagement was published in September 2022.

During the recent three days of meetings at the College of Bishops, bishops drew on this wealth of resources and the many conversations that have been held with a wide range of stakeholders to inform their discernment.

Working in small groups, bishops shared their different views and discussed how the Church should approach questions relating to same sex marriage and civil partnerships, as well as other pastoral and theological concerns relating to human identity and sexuality in a way that honours the different deeply held convictions that exist among bishops and the wider Church.

Commenting at the end of the meeting, the Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullally said: "The bishops' honest and fruitful conversations were undergirded by a deep desire to walk together and to find a way forward that will be good news to the Church and to wider society. Bishops were united in their determination to come to a clear sense of direction in time for the meeting of the Church's General Synod in February 2023."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "These were three days of conversations held in an atmosphere of collegiality, mutual respect and understanding. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated so openly."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "As our meeting draws to its close and as our journey moves on to the next stage in the LLF process, I pray for continued guidance from the scriptures about God's intention for human life in all its glory and joy."

Details of the three-day programme can be found on the [Living in Love and Faith Journey web page](#) and a short video on the reflections of some of the bishops who attended is posted below.

The next College of Bishops will be in December where further discernment and decision-making will take place.

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