



LIVING
IN LOVE
& FAITH

The Church of England's House of Bishops has agreed in principle that prayers asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples – known as *Prayers of Love and Faith* – should be commended for use.

The House, which met in London, also concluded that structures for special services for same-sex couples, based on *Prayers of Love and Faith*, should go forward to be formally authorised under canon law.

The bishops will bring proposals to General Synod next month which will pave the way for a process that would lead to the authorisation of these special services under Canon B2.

This process, expected to take until 2025, would involve consultation with every diocese and require approval by General Synod.

Bishops gave serious consideration to an alternative legal process which could have enabled special services to be authorised almost immediately - but temporarily – (under Canon B5A). This would still have required a further process for the services to be authorised permanently (under Canon B2) by Synod.

New draft pastoral guidance will be brought to next month's meeting of Synod, setting out how the system could operate. Further work is already in progress on the second part of the Pastoral Guidance which will look at matters in the life and work of clergy and lay ministers.

Proposals for the *Prayers of Love and Faith* were discussed in an [historic debate at the General Synod in February](#) of this year. Synod called on the bishops to work on Pastoral Guidance and other arrangements needed to implement that decision.

The proposals will be discussed in detail at a meeting of General Synod in London on November 13-15.

At today's meeting the bishops agreed that:

- The prayers and readings in *Prayers of Love and Faith* for use with same-sex couples will be commended by the House of Bishops for use in public worship.
- Special standalone services set out in *Prayers of Love and Faith* should be brought to the General Synod to decide whether to authorise them under Canon B2, after consultation with dioceses.
- There is also further work under way to explore further forms of pastoral reassurance and formal structural pastoral provision to ensure the conscience of everyone is respected.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who co-chaired the steering group which has brought the proposals forward, said: "The House of Bishops' decisions today continue to implement Synod's vote to recognise publicly the commitment of same-sex couples and to pray God's blessing for

them.

“They have agreed to commend *Prayers of Love and Faith* and also considered the best way to authorise special standalone services. Having carefully considering the legal, theological and pastoral implications of possible approaches, the bishops concluded that it would ultimately be clearer to proceed directly to consideration under Canon B2.

“We acknowledge that there are some who would like this process to move faster, however the move to full authorisation will provide clarity and wide consultation ahead of a final decision by synod in 2025.

“I know that for some, these measures go too far and, for others, not nearly far enough and the bishops discussed the need for pastoral reassurance, and for some the need for formal structural pastoral provision.

“But the heart of the gospel is reconciliation – our desire is to remain together as one Church in our uncertainty, finding ways to live well with our different perspectives and convictions.”

The meeting included times of prayer and worship, with prayers said for crises around the world including the situations in Israel and Gaza, and in Afghanistan.

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