

The Bishop of Newcastle, Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, has announced that she is stepping down as joint Lead Bishop for Living in Love and Faith.

The Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow, remains in post and is in discussions with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York about the future shape of the leadership team.

Read statements below from Bishops Helen-Ann and Martyn and the archbishops.

**Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley** said: “My first commitment, and priority, is to continue to respond to God’s calling to be Bishop of Newcastle, and I rejoice in this calling. It has become clear to me in the last 48 hours that there are serious concerns relating to the recent process of appointing an Interim Theological Advisor to the House of Bishops.

“This was, and is not, an LLF appointment, and neither Bishop Martyn nor myself were involved in it. Whilst the remit of the theological advisor is broader than any matters relating to LLF, there is no doubt that LLF remains front and centre in the life of our Church at this time.

“What has transpired in the last 48 hours has had a critically negative impact on the work Bishop Martyn and I were seeking, in good faith, to do. My role as co-lead bishop for the LLF process is now undermining my capacity to fulfil my primary calling, to lead and care for the people and places of the Diocese of Newcastle.

“I am fully committed to the vocation and life of the Church of England, its place in our diverse communities across this land, and in the wider Anglican Communion.

“Mindful of different views within my own diocese, I am also fully committed to the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people. I do not believe these are mutually exclusive, and I am not naïve in saying this.

“As I approach the 10th anniversary of my consecration as a bishop, my decision to step down from my LLF role is not one I have taken lightly, but is one built on all I have learnt about being a bishop, both here and in Aotearoa New Zealand.

“I will continue to be involved in the LLF process as a diocesan bishop, and will endeavour to prayerfully and actively work towards fulfilling the commitments expressed above, and those already agreed to in General Synod.”

The **Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell**, said: "We thank Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley for being willing to take up this complex portfolio alongside Bishop Martyn Snow despite the many other calls and demands upon their time and skills.

“We want to acknowledge the commitment and work she has put in to LLF, as well as her vision for moving forward more creatively. We are very sorry she is stepping down, but respect and support her in her decision.

“The LLF process has encouraged us all to learn more deeply about our own identities, those of the people we love, our convictions and how we live well in the world. This has been complex and painful for many of us.

“Although, of course, we continue to support robust debate around these issues where there is disagreement in our church, we are dismayed that sometimes this has also included unjust and inappropriate personal attacks. As followers of Christ, the manner in which we conduct our debate is as important as the debate itself.

“We are grateful to Bishop Helen-Ann and Bishop Martyn for their call for a change in tone, and their encouragement to reflect on how we all conduct ourselves in this conversation.”

“We hope and pray for a renewed grace and commitment to one another as we move forward together.”

**Bishop Martyn Snow** said: “I am deeply saddened by the Bishop of Newcastle’s decision to stand down from the role of Co-Lead Bishop for the Living in Love and Faith process. I greatly enjoyed working with her on this process and I want to express my personal thanks for her support and encouragement, and my respect for her decision to prioritise her ministry in her own diocese.

“I took on the role of Co-Lead Bishop for the Living in Love and Faith process out of a sense of calling to bridge-building and reconciliation – both for their own sake and as a core part of our Christian witness. Having reflected on my position over the past couple of days, this sense of calling remains.

“However, I recognise that confidence and trust in the Living in Love and Faith process is low, and that I cannot by myself rebuild that trust or command the confidence of the full breadth of the Church of England. So I have indicated to the Archbishops that I am willing to continue in the role of Co-Lead Bishop with several provisos:

“Like Bishop Helen-Ann, my diocese is my first priority. I have been in Leicester eight years and the people and communities of this wonderful diocese know my views on LLF. They may not all agree with my views but we have had regular discussions at Diocesan Synod, in small groups and one-to-one conversations, and there is a high level of mutual respect. I will continue to prioritise these local conversations.

“The Archbishops will need to appoint a successor to Bishop Helen-Ann who commands similar respect across the House of Bishops and General Synod. It is important to model an approach of people with differing views working together.

“The Secretary-General will need to appoint a second Interim Theological Adviser to the House of Bishops so that there is a similar model of

working together across difference. And the Co-Lead Bishops for LLF must be involved in the appointment of future Theological Advisers (we were not involved in the recent process). The Faith and Order Commission must remain a diverse group which resources the House of Bishops through careful, rich and nuanced theological work.

“I have asked the Archbishops to consider leading a time of prayerful reflection at General Synod which sets this whole process once again in the context of discernment about what sort of Church we are called to be in the coming years.

“I remain committed to serving the Church as we seek a way forward which ensures that LGBTQIA+ people are accepted, valued and loved for who they are, and ensures that those who cannot in conscience use the Prayers of Love and Faith also have a secure place within the Church.

“The commitments which will be brought to Synod later this month will do more to lay out the steps we need to take to improve the transparency and accountability of the Living in Love and Faith process. My prayers are for an honest, generous and prayerful debate.”

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