

Introducing Living in Love and Faith and the Pastoral Advisory Group

7 July 2018

Episcopal Teaching Document



on human sexuality and marriage

As the project has begun to develop, the need for a less cumbersome working title for the project has emerged. That is why we have agreed a new working title:

Living in Love and Faith



Christian Teaching and Learning about
Human Identity, Sexuality and Marriage

Living in Love and Faith:

Christian Teaching and Learning about Human Identity, Sexuality and Marriage

I hope the reason for this title will become clearer as this presentation and this afternoon's engagement goes on.

I would like to pay tribute to the over 40 people giving of their time, experience and expertise serving on the Coordinating Group and the Thematic Working Groups. They have already produced substantial amounts of work – a range of fascinating background papers to help us shape our thinking and the product we will be producing for the church.

This is not a time for anxiety – it's a time to think, to reflect and to work together.



Thank you for this opportunity to share with you what has happened since this project came into being this time last year.

The work can be conceived of as involving four aspects, each of which I will take in turn.

I don't need to tell you – of all people – that the project is complex and ambitious.

VISIONING



It has been vital, therefore, for all those involved in implementing the project to establish a vision that gives us the inspiration, imagination, direction and determination that we need to make this project succeed. In developing the vision, we began by asking ourselves the question, 'what would success beyond our wildest dreams look like'? Here are some of the highlights of that emerging vision.

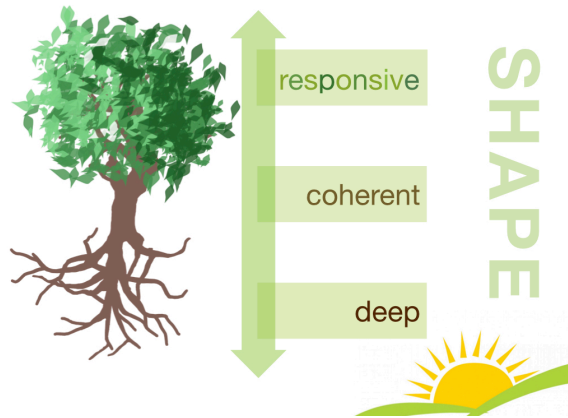


It will be a 'landmark' piece of work – one that gains respect because:

- ◆ it will dig deep into Scripture, acknowledging its authority in the community, tradition and pastoral practice of the church.
- ◆ It will neither dodge the diversity of views in our church today – nor the ever growing number of questions with which our society is faced in relation to human identity, sexuality and relating.
- ◆ It will address the culture which we inhabit and within which we are called to be salt and light and in that sense have a **mission focus** that brings good news.
- ◆ It will comprise a variety of teaching and learning resources that are **accessible** and attractive and therefore widely used by 'the whole people of God'.
- ◆ The impact of producing the resources and the way that people are invited to engage with them will be a **unifying** one: it will enable us to live together fruitfully and with ecclesial and personal integrity.
- ◆ It will **embody vulnerability with humility and a mutual desire to discern God's voice** among us as we commit to deepening relationships with one another – both in the way that the project is carried out and in the teaching and learning that it invites its audience to engage with.



We have also clarified the **purpose** of the project: it is first to provide resources for the bishops to exercise their teaching both in the sense of teaching the faith and in helping the whole people of God to engage in deep and transformative learning.



An image that continues to inspire and clarify the shape of the project is that of a tree:

Its **roots** reflect the deep scholarly study that is currently going on in a range of disciplines.

This work will be brought together into a substantial core document – which may well be a book – represented by the **trunk**.

From the trunk spring the **branches and leaves** which represent a variety of forms that the material is likely to need to take in order to be responsive, accessible and attractive to the whole people of God.

The life of the tree is, of course, dependent on the **flow of sap** up and down from the leaves to the roots and vice versa. This represents the work of the Holy Spirit in the lived experiences of both individuals and churches, about which I will say more later on.

WORKSHOP



You are invited to learn more about the vision and to contribute your own reflections and comments at the Vision Workshop in the Spring Lane building.



LEARNING



The second aspect I'd like to share with you is about **learning**.

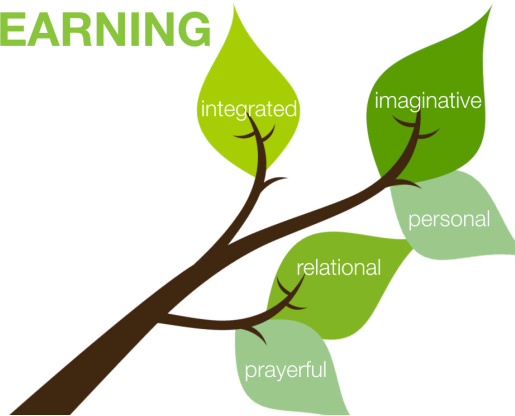
LEARNING



Teaching and learning go hand in hand. This means that even as the **four thematic working groups** have been meeting together - exploring how their particular disciplines intersect with questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships, marriage, anthropology and ecclesiology - they themselves have been learning from one another and are committed to continuing to do so.

It has been a process of 'feeling together' where and what are the key questions that need to be asked and addressed. As you know, members of the groups represent diverse views and so the groups have also begun to learn to be honest with one another and to bring diverging perspectives to the table.

LEARNING



This kind of openness to learning will require our work to **integrate** scholarship with experience and practice, to be **imaginative** in our approach – ensuring that the learning enables people to make **personal** connections. This suggests the need to maintain a **relational** dynamic– and, above all, to **pray** for the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to be at work.

LEARNING



A willingness and desire to learn asks of us to cultivate qualities of **attentiveness**, **openness**, **compassion** towards others with whom we differ, **vulnerability**, **courage**, and a spirit of **adventure** that is expectant of new insights.

LEARNING



Our work has been described as a **mapping exercise** that sets out areas of agreement and disagreement. Our emerging vision suggests that we are not only mapping existing territory, but do so in the certain hope of discovering new territory. We anticipate discovering new insights that may challenge and inspire each of us in different ways, bringing fresh understanding to what God is doing in and through his church today.

LEARNING



The work that the groups have done so far could be described as the **ingredients of a cake**. The work that you will be able to sample in the seminars do not yet look or taste like the cake but represent a selection of ingredients that we have gathered so far.



SEMINARS

You are invited to join these learning communities – to meet the members of the groups and to sample some of the work that they have been doing.

INVOLVING



The third component of our work – **involving** – is about including others in the process of creating the document.



A substantial piece of work that we are embarking on is **engaging with church communities and individuals**.

We want to hear about good practice in the ministry and mission of church communities in a range of contexts, embodying different theological convictions. We want to hear their stories of welcome, whether they are small rural churches, busy city churches, estate churches or fresh expressions. There are, I am sure, examples of not so good practice that we could 'report'. Others have done this and continue to do so. We have chosen to take the approach of appreciative inquiry: searching out the good from which we can learn.

We also want to listen to individuals' voices right across a variety of axes of difference. We want to hear the voices of those who are certain that they either agree or disagree with the current teaching of the church, those who are confused and unsure, the young, the old and the in between. We need their help to ensure we are addressing the questions that the people of God are asking and to find out what format teaching and learning resources could take in order to be attractive and helpful. And we will invite them to tell us their stories.

All of this is in order to ensure that the scholarly work that we are doing makes connections with experience and vice versa. This is not a theologically passive listening to experience or a piece of sociological research – as valuable as these might be – but looks to create a robust conversation between experience and theology as a means of listening to the Holy Spirit.

INVOLVING



In a similar vein, we recognise that the Church of England is not isolated: what it decides and does as an established church will affect other churches and faith communities in England. Similarly, as one member of the Anglican Communion, we recognise that what we do and decide affects others. And so, in a spirit of learning we want to hear about the experiences, stories and perspectives of sister churches right across the Communion.

INVOLVING



Last but not least, while this is a project commissioned by and implemented with the House of Bishops, we are committed to offering you, as members of General Synod, regular opportunities to hear about and comment on our work.



WORKSHOP

So **you are invited** to come to our Questions workshop to tell us about your questions and what kind of resources you would like to see produced.

PLANNING

Finally and briefly, moving on to **planning**



PLANNING

social &
biological
sciences

biblical
studies

history

theology

co-ordinating group

participation & consultation

2018

This year our work is focused on the Thematic Working groups, and the participatory process I have just described.

2019



integrating disciplines, experience, good practice

writing, designing, road testing



In 2019, we begin to bring this together by reconfiguring the Thematic Working Groups into interdisciplinary groups that will weave their scholarly work together with the stories of lived experience within a framework of questions and themes that resonate with what we have learned by engaging with individuals and churches.

in 2019 we will be road-testing the material that is being produced, so that, by 2020, we will be in a position to “publish” the core document as well as the other teaching and learning resources that will spring from it

2020

agreement

July 2020

design & publication



– just in time for Lambeth 2020!





WORKSHOP

You are invited to find out more about the project and how we plan to go about it and to ask about and comment on its aims, purpose and plans.



I would like to finish by sharing two images with you.

The first is that of a tangled knot of multiple threads of different colours. We can choose to try and pull on the threads, making the knot tighter and tighter and eventually causing the threads to break. Or we can pause, and patiently unravel the threads one by one until the knot has been disentangled and the liberated threads can be woven together into something new and beautiful. That is how I envisage this project.



The second image is that of gathering around a table at which we feast on a rich fare of scholarship while listening deeply to stories of lived experience.



As we do so, we discover that Christ himself, the scriptural Christ who was shaped by scripture and shapes us through scripture, is not only among us but is our host. It is he who has invited us to listen out for what the Spirit is saying to the church today. What new teaching and learning is he calling all of us to? What transformational work is he doing among us?



Please do **visit the prayer space** we have prepared to take time out to reflect on and pray for this work.

PRAYER

what about now?

But what about now?

We cannot put life on 'pause' to wait until the work of the *Living in Love and Faith* project is completed. There are difficult and painful pastoral situations that need to be addressed here and now.

PASTORAL ADVISORY GROUP



principles

resources

guidance

*for pastoral ministry
among LGBTI+ people
within current arrangements
in the Church of England*

This is why the Pastoral Advisory Group has been formed and task to provide principles, resources and guidance for pastoral ministry among LGBTI+ people within the current teaching of the Church of England.

The group has a diverse membership and is forging deep relationships with one another in order to carry out its task with integrity and compassion. It is determined to do its work 'with' rather than 'about' LGBTI+ people and has co-commissioned the Wider Participation process together with the *Living in Love and Faith* project.



PASTORAL ADVISORY GROUP



Meet the group

What is the task?

How will others
be involved?

SEMINAR

You are invited to come and find out more about what we are doing and how we are going about it at the Pastoral Advisory Group seminar.



**Thank
you!**