
Executive Summary

1. This paper provides an update on the work on Living in Love and Faith undertaken since February 2024. It sets out the outline of potential proposals designed to articulate how we can remain in unity despite our differences, building on previous work and decisions taken by the General Synod and the House of Bishops
2. These proposals are in outline form and will require constructive and wide engagement as they are developed in detail. The core elements of those emerging proposals are:
 - To remove the restrictions in the current pastoral guidance on using the Prayers of Love and Faith for a three-year period of discernment.
 - To introduce alongside this a model of specific and defined delegation of episcopal ministry, so that those on all sides of the debate, who feel they require it, can request care from a bishop whose ministry they are in conscience able to receive, supported by an Independent Review Panel to assess where practice departs from agreed principles.
 - For more work under the aegis of the Faith and Order Commission on the nature of doctrine to enable further conversations on whether to remove current restrictions on clergy being in same-sex civil marriages, for decision by the House of Bishops in early January 2025 and to be presented at the February 2025 General Synod
3. It also sets out how these proposals might be given effect, including through a Bishops' Statement and a Code of Practice, both for development in detail if the General Synod is content with this direction of travel. Annex A outlines some potential principles of extended/delegated episcopal ministry and some possible further areas for consideration; Annex B outlines how an Independent Review Panel might be established and implemented; Annex C is a note on the legal position.
4. The paper presents the outline of an overall proposal without detail and underscores the need to develop this detail through ongoing engagement and consultation. What is sought is a generous space where all can thrive and where different theological convictions are honoured, recognising also that there are many congregations where a diversity of views are held.

Preface by +Martyn Snow

As Lead Bishop for the Living in Love and Faith process, I recently invited members of the three LLF Working Groups to gather in Leicester for a weekend. This was a remarkable coming together of people who hold very different views on relationships, human sexuality, and marriage, including many members who also sit on General Synod.

In the early summer warmth, on the weekend of Eurovision (watched by some while studiously avoided by others), we went deeper into our differences about doctrine and ethics, and then found ourselves uniting in a shared commitment to finding a way for as many as possible to remain part of the Church of England. The significance of this articulation of a desire for unity should not be underestimated. It has allowed for a new spirit of generosity and pragmatism.

Unity matters – it really matters. The unity of the Church speaks of the unity of the Trinity, the unity of the divine and human nature of Christ and the reconciliation which Christ alone can mediate. So, what we saw on the weekend in Leicester is confirmation that all parts of the Church rightly take unity seriously. But how are we going to express this unity while also being honest about the depth of our differences?

It is into this reality that the proposals in this paper are offered. They are in outline form at this stage, and their development will require ongoing constructive and wide engagement as we continue to discern how to best navigate a way forward as one Church. This proposal outlines a process for removing the restrictions in the Pastoral Guidance on using the PLF alongside work required on pastoral provision based on a specific and defined delegation of episcopal ministry. It also sets out a timetable towards making clear decisions on clergy in same-sex civil marriage resourced by additional theological work on doctrine. How this work develops will itself have an important bearing on the shape of pastoral provision.

Ecclesiologically, we may feel that this is unsatisfactory – and we would be right. None of us wants to have our differences displayed in this way. But we can, I believe, see this as a legitimate extension of our Anglican ecclesiology which has always held together different traditions in one church. At times, these differences have been suppressed through enforced conformity (e.g., the great ejection of 1662). At other times, they have been allowed to surface (e.g., the great diversity of worship styles now present in the Church of England).

There is a lot of detail still to be worked through and this paper gives only a surface level view of how this approach may work. At this stage, the mind of the General Synod is being sought on the outline of this proposal, and importantly on whether this approach is one that might enable us to move forward as one Church. The staging of work as described in the paper and timetable is clear that feedback on the detail of the different strands of work will be needed in both February and July 2025. Our hope is that such backing might empower wide participation in the working groups needed to underpin this work and enable clearer on-going communication with stakeholders.

Of utmost importance in this approach is that we recognise it is far from the ideal – it is designed for a specific period while we discern God's leading for the longer term. It is likely that this proposal will contain some elements that people have particular concerns over, or would wish to see more firmly articulated. This is perhaps inevitable given the challenging differences we face. Our hope though is that there is enough alignment that this proposal can provide a way forward for it to gain support across these differences. The practicalities will need to be regularly monitored throughout the initial discernment period and beyond, and

the approach may need to be adjusted. For this reason, ongoing engagement through diocesan synods is also being sought and there is a commitment to regularise core elements of the proposal as we discern how best to navigate our differences in ways that promote unity, strengthen pastoral care and enable partnership in mission. For we desire the highest possible level of communion and we long for the day when these arrangements are no longer needed.

Introduction

5. This phase of the LLF process is focused on seeking to find a way of moving forward while enabling as many as possible to hold together within the Church of England. Key to this is moving to a settled position around the full use of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF), accompanied by Pastoral Guidance, and proportionate pastoral provision measures.
6. This emerging proposal has been drawn together by the LLF Programme Board through a process of ongoing iterative development including the three LLF working groups, wider stakeholder consultation in and the discussion of proposals by the College and House of Bishops.
7. The proposal presented here is an initial outline on which further work is required. However, before this work progresses the House of Bishops wishes to test the mind of Synod as to whether the approach suggested is one that will enable the implementation of LLF. There remain contestable areas within this proposal; some in specific aspects of the proposal and others in the detail that might follow. The proposal does seek to address this, acknowledging that there are differences in positions held on LLF across the church, and seeking to discern how to move forward as one church.

Overview of key elements

8. The three LLF working groups looked at approval routes for 'standalone' services of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF); the outstanding areas of the Pastoral Guidance, particularly those relating to ministry and questions around clergy entering into same sex marriage; and the minimal, necessary and proportionate pastoral reassurance that will enable the full use of the PLF and the introduction of the remaining Pastoral Guidance. Their outputs largely came from a residential weekend in Leicester, which formed an initial outline proposal. Further work on the detail of the proposal was subsequently undertaken by the LLF Programme Board.
9. The proposal contained in this paper is based on the framework identified through the working groups and developed by the LLF Programme Board. As this is an outline framework, detail is not included, although the paper aims to identify where this will be required. The suggested mechanism for taking this detailed work forward is through the LLF Working Groups, as with the initial work.
10. There is one significant area where this proposal differs from earlier versions. This is in the description of pastoral provision as framed around the notion of developing three spaces. The language of three spaces sought to acknowledge that responses to LLF appear to be emerging in roughly three ways: broad agreement; strong disagreement; and many congregations or individuals for whom there is a mixture of the two, or who do not want to make a decision on this at this time. The notion of three spaces was an attempt to describe this and to frame pastoral provision accordingly. However, in discussions at the College and House of Bishops, concerns were raised that the identification of 'spaces' could be seen, or develop, in ways that emphasise separation and that a majority of individuals, congregations or parishes may not see the need for any additional provision. Therefore, the notion of three spaces is not used in this outline proposal. However, the principal that any form of Pastoral Provision needs to be symmetrical (albeit not identical) in order for groups

with distinctly held convictions to flourish, remains unchanged, as explained later in the paper.

11. The proposal builds upon the work already undertaken to provide an opt-in arrangement for full use of the PLF and to clarify the pastoral provision that is required to enable this. Alongside this, it outlines how the use of the PLF resources in standalone services of PLF and requests for pastoral provision could be monitored during a discernment period to inform further work for formal consideration. The proposal describes the mechanism through which we might discern God's leading for the longer term.
12. The proposal is discussed in more detail below: however, there are some key elements to draw attention to at the outset.
13. Underpinning the proposal is the recognition that, as Christians, we hold a variety of views on LLF, all of which are held with integrity and all of which deserve respect.
14. In considering the elements of this proposal, it has become clear that some further work is required around the nature of doctrine, particularly how it changes or develops. This work is required to enable conversations about the possibility of removing current restrictions on clergy being in same-sex civil marriages, and to resource any decisions about that removal. The timetable for this work sets out the intention for this to be undertaken at a pace that enables the fullest possible detail on the proposal to be presented to the February 2025 General Synod.
15. This proposal intentionally describes this process leading to a three-year period of discernment in the life of the church to enable the exploration of differing developments and practice while holding together as one church. This is specifically intended to be 'discernment' and not 'reception'. Initially, through to February and then July 2025, this will focus on defining the detail for each aspect of the proposal informed by ongoing theological work. If this progresses, ongoing discernment will still be required as the nature of our disagreements are still to be more fully understood and the ways in which we are seeking to address these may continue to need to be refined.
16. Overall, this proposal seeks to encourage those who hold different views with integrity to thrive and continue to relate together well in our common life. Part of this requires the recognising by all that different views are held with integrity, and the need for purposeful commitment to practical and ongoing engagement across our differences. As such, the outline of areas for inclusion in a Code of Practice for Pastoral Provision includes how this might frame and shape practice for all; laity, clergy, bishops and parishes.

Emerging proposal

17. This proposal seeks to identify the grounds for a settled position around the use of the *Prayers of Love and Faith*, along with pastoral guidance applicable to their use, and proportionate pastoral provision to enable this. As such, the elements in this proposal are interdependent and work together to provide different constituencies with provision and reassurance.

Prayers of Love and Faith

18. The recommendation is to remove the current constraints in the Pastoral Guidance to allow the commended PLF material to be used on a standalone basis in the discretion of individual incumbents. It suggests an intentional period of discernment of at least three years should be set in place to monitor use, inform connected developments in the Pastoral Guidance and pastoral provision, and inform longer term practice. During this time, usage would be monitored on an annual basis through existing data or feedback gathering models, with a review at the end of the discernment period to establish what should happen next. This discernment period of trial usage will need to be concurrent with some form of pastoral provision. A symmetrical process of registration could be used both by those wishing to register to use the PLF in standalone services (and therefore be part of the process of providing feedback) or by those requesting pastoral provision through extended (delegated) episcopal ministry. In both cases, parishes or ministers would be asked to give some theological rationale for their request and to be part of the ongoing gathering of feedback during the period of discernment. More detailed work is required to clarify the nature of theological rationale required to request such provision.
19. This model would require national consistency of outcome but allow for the opportunity of contextual regional implementation in how to achieve this, with extended (delegated) episcopal ministry at a local level (as some regions are already exploring). At the end of the discernment period the Liturgical Commission would gather information around what liturgical changes might be required, and the Pastoral Consultative Group would review the pastoral guidance and provision, to assess how these would be required (or altered) moving forward depending on decisions made at the end of the discernment period. This model would also require clear national communications. It allows for the option of a B2 vote following the discernment process, were this desired.

Pastoral Guidance

20. The proposal recommends separating the question of clergy in same-sex marriage from the pastoral guidance around the PLF. There is a clear desire to avoid inconsistency in approaches to disapplying discipline to clergy entering into same-sex civil marriages (sometimes called a 'postcode lottery'). It is also clear that, for many, additional pastoral provision would be required were there to be a change in this area, not least because the enforcement of discipline is not ultimately in the discretion of individual bishops but is subject to statutory, judicial, and other processes. This provision could be developed and informed by active consultation during a period of discernment. This period of discernment would also be an opportunity for theological work on related questions of the nature of doctrine.
21. It has been suggested that a statement from the House of Bishops affirming common ground would be helpful, particularly in providing a recognition of the integrity of different approaches and setting out how we speak or relate to one another across these. It was noted that specific pastoral guidance would be required for ordinands or those in the discernment process.
22. This statement, and the existing parts 1 and 2 of the Pastoral Guidance, will likely also require further Interim Ministry Guidance. Between them these documents will replace *Issues in Human Sexuality* (recognising that the Pastoral Guidance

document will need to be regularly updated as this process continues). This Interim Guidance will be clear on Church of England doctrine, while also acknowledging the period of discernment enabling the use of the PLF in standalone services, requests for pastoral provision, and further theological work on doctrine (including how this relates to clergy in same-sex civil marriages). It will also set out the foundational requirements of sexual and other relationships required of clergy.

23. It was felt that regional models for providing pastoral provision offer a more helpful way forward as they provide a reciprocal and collegiate approach. This could work within a common national framework provided by the Pastoral Guidance, with scope for regional implementation. It has been suggested that informal societies could provide pastoral and spiritual support for parishes, ministers or individual lay people alongside a nationally led regional model.

Pastoral Provision

24. Shared values were agreed by the working group, which would need to shape the proposals for pastoral provision:
- Plain speaking as we discern God's leading with honesty and transparency.
 - Liveability – all parts of the Church must be able to live with the way forward – in the hope that all can flourish.
 - Generosity – all parts of the Church must be prepared to 'give away' as well as 'receive' from others.
 - Non-coercion – no person or church should feel pressured into doing anything or aligning with anyone.
 - Symmetry – arrangements for pastoral provision must be symmetrical (even if not identical) for those wanting to preserve the current doctrine of marriage and those wanting a development of the doctrine.
 - Proportionality – the level of pastoral provision will be proportionate to the changes in liturgy / practice / doctrine.
 - Provisionality - arrangements need to reflect the sense that we continue to be in a period of discernment.
 - National consistency of outcome balanced with regional implementation.
25. Following further conversations with stakeholders, the Programme Board suggested adding an additional value:
- Relationality – all parts of the Church should commit to intentional engagement across difference of views, including where this is worked out in practical ways with pastoral provision.
26. The proposal recommends that reassurance is required to enable broad use of the standalone services of PLF (by those who wish to do so), by offering delegated episcopal ministry from a bishop whose ministry they are in conscience able to receive for those who do not wish to use them, and by offering equivalent delegated episcopal ministry for those who wish to use them in contexts where their bishop does not recommend their use.. This would not *require* legislation but would be strengthened by some level of legislative underpinning. Irrespective of legislation, this model would require a Code of Practice from the House of Bishops, which would take some months to agree (see Annex A). It would also require the establishment of an Independent Review Panel, which would use the agreed Code of Practice as the basis for review (see Annex B). This model of extended episcopal ministry could be

accompanied by the creation of informal societies which could provide ongoing informal pastoral support for ministers who may be in contexts where requesting formal provision has been determined to not be needed or necessary. It should be noted that there may well be many parishes or ministers who hold a different view to their bishop but do not wish to request delegated ministry from a bishop who shares their view.

27. The group conversations did identify that enabling clergy to be in same-sex civil marriages would be seen by some as necessitating provision based on transferred episcopal jurisdiction, perhaps accompanied by more formal society arrangements. However, it was noted (particularly in the subsequent discussions by the House/ College of Bishops) that others would strongly oppose any such formal transfer. This is likely to be raised in ongoing discussions on the development of detail of a Code of Practice and in the theological work to be undertaken on the nature of doctrine, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of marriage and the question of clergy in same-sex civil marriages.
28. As has been the case throughout the LLF process, it is important to remember that opinions and beliefs on the Prayers of Love and Faith are by no means binary. As well as the group within the Church who wish to make full use of the PLF, including in stand-alone services, and the group who are troubled by this change, there is also a substantial body of opinion in the Church who fall into neither camp. This substantial group include all those people who are not certain of their view on the matters raised by LLF, or have yet to discern their view; and also those people who may have a view, but for whom it is not a first-order issue one way or the other. All those views are held with integrity and deserve respect.
29. It is also important to note that not every situation or context where differing convictions are held will require pastoral provision measures. In many – even most – situations where individuals or parishes hold different convictions to other individuals or to their bishop, people will find ways to work across these differences without needing to request provision. However, in recognition that this will not be possible for all, these pastoral provision measures are being proposed.

What does this retain/ what does it change?

30. For those who have not been involved in the discussions of the LLF Working Groups over the past few months, it will not be easy to see the journey that the LLF Programme Board and Working Groups have travelled in forming these proposals – it should be noted that the Working Groups have worked incredibly hard to consider the questions posed to them, and have conducted this work in a manner that has been marked by graciousness, respect for one another, and a deep desire to both listen and be heard by one another. We are incredibly grateful to them for this.
31. The working groups were given assumptions to work from, based on previous work to date. As such, the proposals being suggested are intended to build on previous votes held by the House of Bishops and the General Synod. They do, however, contain some different suggestions for ways of achieving these ends. This section highlights some of these and their underlying logic.

Approval route for standalone PLF

32. The amended motion at the November 2023 General Synod asked the House of Bishops to ‘consider whether some standalone services for same-sex couples could be made available for use, possibly on a trial basis, on the timescale envisaged by the motion passed by the Synod in February 2023.’
33. Possibly the greatest potential difference between the current proposal and previous proposals (especially the LLF motion as amended at the November 2023 General Synod) around the route of standalone services of PLF is that it was previously assumed that PLF 'standalone services' would be brought into use by means of the archbishops' authorisation for experimental use (Canon B 5A) prior to the usual synodical process for liturgical business. However, the language of the amendment was not so specific.
34. Authorisation for 'experimental use' has previously been used to 'road-test' liturgical material so that feedback can be collected on usage and on the details of texts (e.g., in the process for synodical approval of the Alternative Baptism Texts in Accessible Language). Since the proposed 'standalone' services, which are outline orders of service, do not contain any special liturgical texts that are not in the Resource Section it is apparent that the question being considered is one of principle rather than a liturgical question. It was therefore felt that this was not an appropriate use of Canon B 5A.
35. The proposal being put forward envisages the House of Bishops commending the use – by those who wish to do so – of the PLF material in ‘standalone services’ for a specified period of time and so would be consistent with the terms of the amendment. The proposal does not dictate what should happen at the end of the discernment period: were it to be considered that, having gathered feedback, there are wider doctrinal and liturgical questions to be addressed, it might be appropriate at that stage to use the Canon B 2 route for the formal approval of forms of service.

Question of doctrine – where we are now

36. In commending the PLF material the House of Bishops has been clear that it does not consider the prayers in the Resource Section, in themselves, to be contrary to, or indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter. Some within the breadth of the Church do not agree with this and view the PLF as signifying a change in doctrine.
37. The House of Bishops has expressed its view on that question so far as the PLF Resource Section is concerned and that view carries significant weight (see Annex C). A formal change to the Pastoral Guidance on this fuller use of the PLF would further reinforce this. However, as Canon B 5 makes clear, it is ultimately not bishops who determine whether the canonical requirements as to the use of services in the discretion of the minister have been met. Only the Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved, dealing with proceedings under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963, can resolve that question in a way that would be legally binding.
38. Proceedings under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 can be brought against an archbishop, bishop, priest or deacon where it is alleged that he or she has committed “an offence against the laws ecclesiastical involving matter of doctrine, ritual or ceremonial”. The statutory procedure for dealing with such allegations is

quite complex and ultimately involves a trial before a court comprised of three bishops and two holders of high judicial office (i.e., judges of the High Court, Court of Appeal or Supreme Court). The likelihood of such proceedings being brought will likely be considerably lower if all concerned are content with the arrangements for Pastoral Provision outlined in this paper and, correspondingly, will likely be higher if that is not the case. Given that the PLF are commended resources this balancing of risks informed the approach suggested by the PLF working group. Annex C collects in one place detailed descriptions of the legal advice previously provided to the House of Bishops on commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith Resources Section and on the question of their authorisation for an experimental period under Canon B 5A.

39. It remains the case, as with all worship used in the Church of England, that the PLF and any services in which they are used would be subject to the usual tests on worship being consistent with the doctrine of the Church, as made clear in the Canons.

Question of doctrine – future work

40. Alongside the work of the LLF Working Groups, the LLF Programme Board and the House and College of Bishops have recognised the need for some further work on the nature of doctrine.
41. One of the challenges of this stage of the LLF work has been to identify exactly what category of questions we have been trying to discern answers to: primarily, LLF seemed to be a question of sexual ethics. Then it was discussed as an ecclesiological question, as we looked together at what it means to be one church. More recently it has touched on questions of liturgy and practice. Now it is clear that the doctrinal elements also need to be explored. These elements raise questions such as: how do we, as a church, develop or change our doctrine? Is it possible to hold multiple doctrines simultaneously, in order to respond in the most gracious and pastoral way possible, even when this is messy or incoherent? Is it possible for there to be a range of interpretations of one doctrine?
42. These questions have come to the fore recently as the House of Bishops has been exploring the possibility of removing restrictions on clergy entering same-sex civil marriages. Some see this as a natural development of the doctrine of marriage, recognising the goods within those relationships and joyfully celebrating them. Others see this as incompatible with the received doctrine of marriage and any change to current practice as breaking that apostolic tradition. We may not be able to reconcile these fundamental differences of views (recognising that these are only two examples of a vast range) but if we are to provide as much pastoral care to as many as possible, we need to be clear about our own doctrinal processes.
43. In light of this, as part of the period of discernment, we are proposing that theological advice is sought on the nature, role, and creation of doctrine from the Theological Adviser(s) to the House of Bishops and the Faith and Order Commission Episcopal Reference Group (FAOC ERG). This work will then resource the ongoing discernment period.
44. This theological work will aim to provide clarity around how doctrine can develop or change within the Church of England: as a result of this, the House of Bishops will be

able to make decisions on the question of the removal of restrictions on clergy entering same-sex civil marriage. It is envisaged that this theological work would be completed within a time frame to enable the House of Bishops consider decisions by January 2025. If decisions are taken towards the removal of restrictions, then any accompanying timetable should include clarity on what actions are immediately possible, and what might require further work or guidance.

45. The development of detail on pastoral provision will need to be undertaken in parallel to this doctrinal work, given that a possible outcome could be a timetable for the removal of restrictions on clergy entering same-sex civil marriages, which would likely have implications for pastoral provision. Pastoral provision would therefore need to be finalised in light of the actual decisions taken and brought to the February 2025 General Synod.
46. A significant consideration for this stage of work is the desire to ensure good processes which acknowledge our differences while keeping as many as possible within the Church of England. If we are to resolve our differences pastorally and relationally, we want to take the time necessary to work through the details of these proposals, acknowledging that the General Synod and House of Bishops have already agreed the core of the proposals and further acknowledging that there is no way to completely avoid legal risks.

Next Steps

47. There is, therefore, a careful balance to strike between keeping a sense of momentum and delivering on the decisions already made, while also taking the time to continue listening to one another and learning together. This suggests a process of staging the implementation of proposals. Initially, this would require a development period, with further work on the detail of the various areas of work (including the removal of restrictions in the Pastoral Guidance on using the PLF material in standalone services, implementing a process for those who wish to do so to register to use these and be part of ongoing monitoring and review, alongside the establishment of a process for those who wish to do so to request extended episcopal ministry, and work on a Code of Practice and Statement from the House of Bishops). During the same stage the FAOC ERG will undertake theological work around the nature of doctrine. This theological work will be brought back to the House of Bishops in early 2025 and will inform decisions around clergy in same-sex civil marriages. There will then be a stage of discerning and finalising pastoral provision in light of any such decisions. Progress on these areas will be presented to General Synod at their meeting in February 2025 for implementation at the July meeting of the General Synod. A subsequent stage will take place following the 3-year period of discernment, learning from the monitoring and review period, the work on the nature of doctrine and subsequent decisions made by the House of Bishops around clergy in same-sex civil marriages. At this point, more formal, longer-term implementation (which may or may not include transferred oversight) could be considered.
48. The LLF working groups, and the LLF Programme Board, are therefore seeing this emerging framework as leading towards a proposal that will enable the use of standalone services of PLF accompanied by appropriate and proportionate levels of reassurance. This suggested way forward will have implications on the timeframe, with firm decisions following the period of discernment possibly not made for a further

number of years. However, it was felt that enabling a period during which processes could be trialled and developed, and feedback gathered across the three areas of work, was the preferred way forward.

49. There are some clear areas of work that will be required for this proposal to be implemented. Key among these are:

- A Bishops' Statement outlining the next steps for a period of discernment.
- Establishment of a clear process for monitoring usage of the PLF, the pastoral guidance, and requests for pastoral provision, *including the establishment of an Independent Review Panel (or an Interim IRP) and the creation of the Pastoral Consultation Group, possibly as a future iteration of the LLF Programme Board, with additional members.*
- Establishment of a process of national consistency of outcome with regional implementation for providing symmetrical pastoral provision.
- A Code of Practice around a symmetrical model of provision.
- Revised Pastoral Guidance to reflect the period of discernment.
- Clarity and sense of requirement of candidates in discernment for ordained ministry.

The IRP and the PCG are italicised, as they have already been agreed by the bishops as being required.

50. The LLF Programme Board, with the working groups, have begun to shape what a Bishops' Statement and a Code of Practice might look like, although much further work is required to agree the detail of these. In addition to the further work required on these documents, there is also further ongoing work required on shaping an emerging proposal in light of the doctrinal work, decisions around clergy in same-sex civil marriage and pastoral provision measures. This work will require wide consultation and refinement, which is outlined in more detail below (paragraphs 56-58).

Bishops' Statement

51. All three of the LLF Working Groups felt strongly that it would be preferable to have national consistency of outcome with regional implementation in how to achieve this, rather than a 'postcode lottery'. This was echoed by comments made at the House of Bishops' meetings in May and June. To help enable this, it has been suggested that a joint statement from the bishops setting out areas of agreement might be helpful.

Such a statement could cover, among other things:

- That, although this is a matter on which there is deeply held disagreement, the bishops affirm one another as members of the Body of Christ, and of the Church of England. Those who hold differing views do so with integrity.
- That, despite this disagreement, there are many areas on which the House as a collegial body do agree. For example, seeing goods in same-sex relationships, such as faithfulness, committedness, love and mutual support. They also see harms in relationships and marriages that are abusive, based on power, or exhibit betrayal.
- That, as bishops they are committed to the pastoral care of all their clergy and will work together to ensure individual clergy are treated with care and respect.
- As part of this commitment to the care of their clergy, they will ensure that no clergy person is left isolated or vulnerable as a result of LLF.

- That this arrangement represents a way of managing different pastoral responses during a time of discernment. It is anticipated that at the end of the discernment period there will be a comprehensive report with recommendations for consideration by the General Synod (of which, of course, the House of Bishops is part).

Code of Practice

52. A period of discernment, as is being suggested around the use of the PLF, the appropriateness of the pastoral guidance, and requests for pastoral provision, will need to be underpinned by a Code of Practice against which behaviours are held accountable by the Interim Independent Review Panel.
53. The Code will need to reflect the doctrinal work described above, while recognising that there is a need to offer pastoral provision to those who have strongly held theological convictions that the developments being explored are an impediment to receiving episcopal ministry, or to those who may wish to embrace these developments but who are under the ministry of a bishop who themselves does not wish to do so at this time.
54. Such a Code of Practice should identify:
- The values and expectations on appropriate conduct for all during this 'period of discernment'.
 - The rationale for this provision.
 - Principles for regional and collegiate approaches to the implementation of this code and other areas of best practice for enabling shared engagement in mission.
 - The specific areas of delegated ministry that may be drawn on.
 - The process for requesting this Provision.
 - The role of the Independent Review Panel.
55. Further detail on the basis and principles of extended (delegated) episcopal ministry can be found in Annex A.

Consultation and engagement

56. Given the critical importance of the Bishops' Statement and the Code of Practice, much further work on their detail is required. This will be undertaken through a continuation of the LLF working groups, consultations with stakeholders (including those groups who have a particular stake in the implementation of future processes – e.g., TEI principals, DDOs, Archdeacons etc.) and further engagement with the College and House of Bishops. The timetable for this detailed further work (see below) should enable subsequent versions to be presented to the General Synod in February 2025.
57. The further and ongoing work will involve wide consultation at different phases, to try and ensure the proposals around pastoral provision being shaped following the doctrinal work are appropriate and proportionate to decisions made. The LLF working groups will continue to work on the detail of the Code of Practice and the pastoral provision measures required, both in advance of and in light of any decisions made by the House of Bishops on clergy entering into same-sex civil marriage. These proposals will be shared with various implementation stakeholders (such as those

groups identified above) for further refinement and to incorporate specific concerns and expertise from those groups. Diocesan Synods will be invited to consult on the emerging proposals. It is likely that the initial stage of this consultation work would take place in the autumn of 2024, although would not be limited to this timeframe. This period would focus on the LLF Working Groups and implementation stakeholder consultation, alongside briefings and preparatory work with Diocesan Synods. Further refinements would continue through the work of the LLF Working Groups, alongside further opportunities for consultation with Diocesan Synod in the period of February – July 2025. The LLF Programme Board will oversee this process and draw together the final proposal.

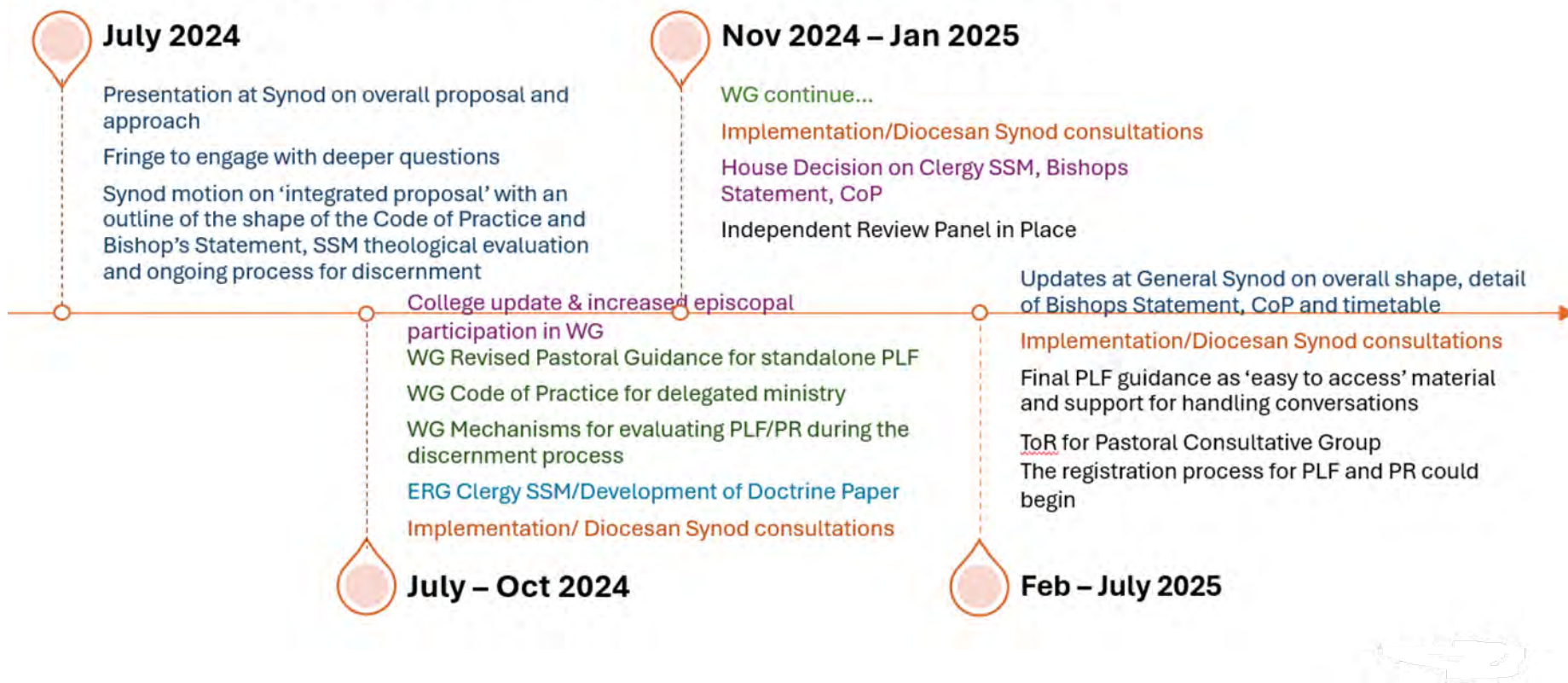
58. It should also be recognised that ongoing consultation with stakeholders may identify areas where provision is still contested. Significant areas around this will be included in future updates on drafting to inform decision making.

1.4 Time-line for final proposal development

MOVING FORWARD AS ONE CHURCH



Indicative Timeline – Proposal Development



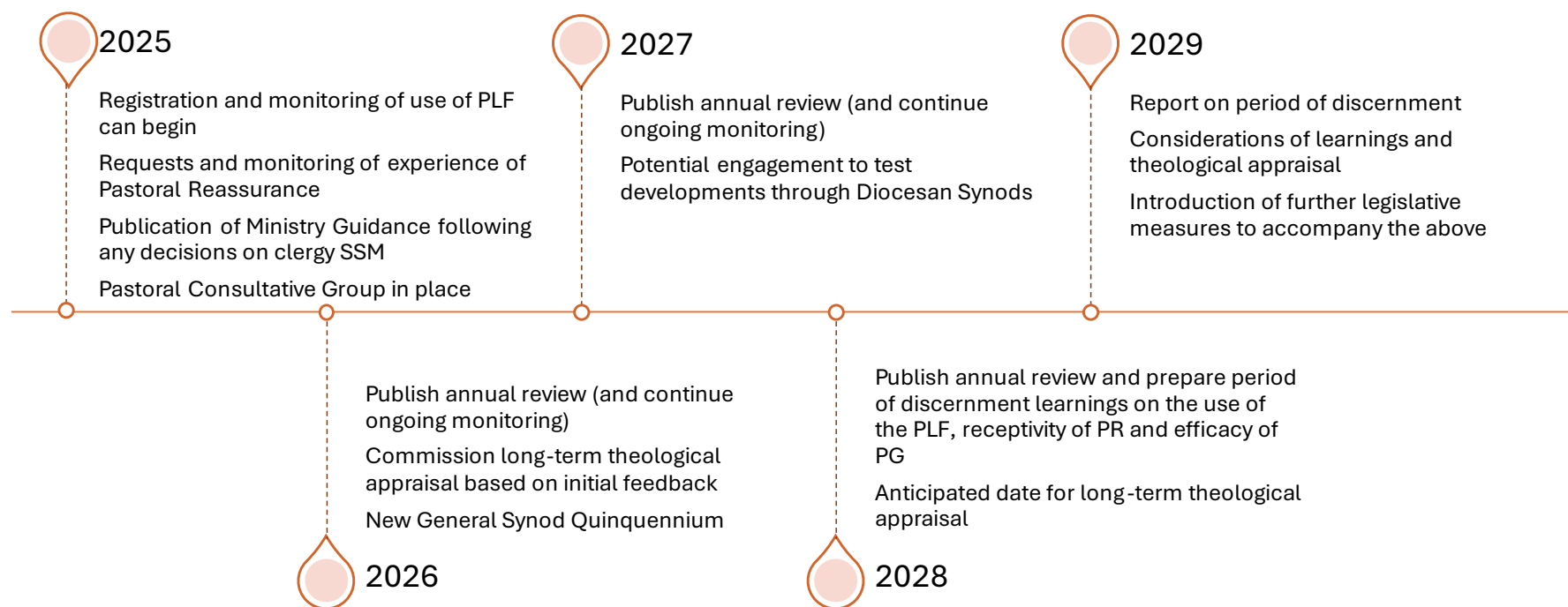
7.4 Period of Discernment

The proposal suggests a period of discernment for 3 years, within which time feedback would be gathered on the use of the PLF, the suitability of the pastoral guidance, and requests for pastoral provision. Updates would be shared on an annual basis, working towards the production of a full report at the end of the discernment period. This could be accompanied by a theological and doctrinal report, likely by the Faith and Order Commission.

MOVING FORWARD AS ONE CHURCH



Indicative Timeline...Period of ongoing discernment



2. Motion before the General Synod

‘That this Synod:

- a. *support the overall proposal and timetable set out in GS 2358;*
- b. *request that the House of Bishops, with the advice of the LLF working groups:*
 - i. *revise the Pastoral Guidance to remove restrictions on the use of PLF in ‘standalone’ services alongside the introduction of an arrangement to register for Pastoral Reassurance;*
 - ii. *establish the basis for the provision of Pastoral Reassurance through a House of Bishops’ Statement and Code of Practice which provides for the delegation of some specific and defined episcopal ministry, and which is overseen by an Independent Review Panel;*
 - iii. *report to this Synod at its February 2025 group of sessions on the further theological work carried out under the auspices of the Faith and Order Commission around the nature of doctrine, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of marriage and the question of clergy in same-sex civil marriages.*
- c. *Agree that taken together the Pastoral Guidance, the Bishop’s Statement and Code of Practice for pastoral provision will replace Issues in Human Sexuality.*
- (d) *Agree for the arrangements for Pastoral Reassurance to be regularly monitored over a period of at least three years before being formally reviewed by General Synod.’*

Annex A

Extended episcopal ministry and possible areas to be considered in a Code of Practice

Part of the proposal around offering pastoral provision suggests a model of symmetrical extended episcopal ministry.

Extended episcopal ministry is based on the principle that the diocesan bishop is the ordinary and chief minister of the diocese and that any exercise of episcopal ministry by other bishops in the diocese is subject to his or her direction. Section 13(1) of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 enables the diocesan bishop to delegate, or extend, such episcopal functions as may be specified to a suffragan bishop or, by the extension contained in section 13(16), to an assistant bishop.

The way in which extended (delegated) episcopal ministry is envisaged to provide pastoral provision in relation to the PLF makes clear that the episcopal functions being extended are limited. This should not, however, be seen as suggesting that extended episcopal ministry is in and of itself a limited approach. The proposal outlines a process for drafting of a Code of Practice for some specific and defined episcopal ministry through a continuation of the LLF working groups, with some level of increased engagement by bishops within these and additional discussions at the College and House of Bishops. The intention of this work would be that such detail could be developed by January 2025 so that this might be brought to the February 2025 General Synod.

The aim of this approach is to shape shared/extended episcopal ministry in such a way that the voices of those who are using PLF and those who in conscience are not are clearly included (but not necessarily implying separate structures). Although much further work is required on the detail of this, including learning from existing arrangements, what could be explored through extended episcopal ministry, and what is usually retained by the Ordinary, are listed below.

Retained by the Ordinary

- Overall oversight of the whole life of the diocese.
- Safeguarding.
- Discipline.

Possible areas for consideration

- Vocational discernment (ordained incumbent)
- Vocational discernment (lay and assistant ordained)
- Training of ministers
- Ordinations
- Confirmations
- A teaching and preaching ministry for those parishes requesting extended episcopal ministry
- Licensing/institution of new ministers
- Deployment of curates
- Filling of vacancies

There are further elements which do not fall directly under episcopal ministry, but which must be considered carefully, such as:

- Finance / payment of parish contributions
- Grants / diocesan resources
- Patrons

- Behavioural code e.g., appropriate language

Cathedrals would be exempted from arrangements for extended episcopal care. Separate policy areas, such as engagement with schools, will also require consideration.

Annex B: Independent Review Panel: Appointment process, draft Terms of Reference and role description

1. This annex presents the appointment process and outline of the draft Terms of Reference for an Independent Review Panel for the application of Living in Love and Faith.
2. The suggestion is that an interim panel is formed as soon as possible to receive and review concerns regarding the implementation of Living in Love and Faith and the Prayers of Love and Faith, and to report and recommend. It is felt that a panel of reviewers, rather than an individual, provides for a diversity of skills, expertise, backgrounds and traditions, and aims to avoid the possibility of one part of the church feeling unable to approach or engage with a sole Independent Reviewer if they feel they do not represent their interests.
3. The Living in Love and Faith process was established as a House of Bishops initiative and, pending agreement of any future formal frameworks within which the Prayers of Love and Faith operate, the Interim Independent Review Panel (IRP) should also be established by the House of Bishops.
4. The aim of the interim panel is to be able to offer reassurance to those who feel that, owing to their theological conviction or conscience regarding LLF and/or their decision either to use or not to use the Prayers of Love and Faith, their position within the Church feels uncertain or that they are being treated unfairly and to recommend solutions to concerns raised. To address the presenting issues effectively, the scope of the panel's terms of reference regarding who can raise concerns and about what will need to be much broader than the example set by the 2014 Declaration and the arrangements will need to be symmetrical – i.e., enabling both those concerned that practice is more “progressive” and more “conservative” (for want of better labels) to raise issues. The IRP will need to be able to consider broader concerns raised as well as specific complaints against set standards.
 - *Who can raise a concern?:* this will need to be a wide range of people and will need to be agreed and defined – for example, bodies of the Church of England, such as PCCs, dioceses, the NCIs, DBFs, representative groups.
 - *Against whom can concerns be raised?:* Likewise, this will need to be defined but could include office holders and Church of England bodies. This would include, but is not limited to, clergy, bishops, cathedral Chapters, DBFs, and others.
5. The work of the Independent Review Panel will need to align with the work of the Pastoral Consultative Group (PCG) (due to be put in place during 2024). Concerns should first be raised through any appropriate local appeals processes that pertain to that case, where these exist. Once established, the PCG can (where appropriate) engage in providing advice to this process (in the interim period the LLF Programme Board will seek to provide this advice). Issues that cannot be resolved with any additional guidance can be referred to the IRP. Vice versa - if the IRP feels that a concern brought to it is best dealt with by the PCG (once established) it can suggest the issue is discussed with the PCG.
6. There will need to be a clear ‘triage’ process with the IRP able to use its discretion to choose carefully which cases to review. There will therefore be no *right* to obtain a review from the Review Panel, as there is under the 2014 Regulations. This is also a capacity consideration as the panel will not be able to review all the cases submitted to it.
7. It will also be necessary to exclude from the remit of the Review Panel matters that are, or have been, subject to judicial or similar processes which apply to issues raised. The IRP should not, for example, be able to review a decision of a bishop's disciplinary tribunal under the Clergy

Discipline Measure, a consistory court, or the determination of an appeal under Canon E 6 against a bishop's decision to revoke a reader's licence.

Considerations

8. There is currently no framework or regulations against which concerns brought before the IRP can be judged. It is hoped that there will be some form of understanding or set of expectations arising from the July of the General Synod which can then be formulated, perhaps along with the Pastoral Principles, into a framework against which the Panel can review concerns. The Terms of Reference for the IRP therefore cannot be completed until the outcome of decisions at Synod is known.
9. If a suitable agreement is not reached at General Synod, the Programme Board and House of Bishops will need to consider whether it still wants to establish a panel and will need to draft a standalone framework/agreement against which the IRP can review concerns raised.
10. As noted in paragraph 3, the IRP is established under the authority of the House of Bishops, but what needs to be decided is the powers that the House will give it. Written into the draft Terms of Reference below is the proviso that the IRP will not act upon or implement its recommendations, but what response or action could, or should, there be if a complaint is upheld? Could it be necessary to lean into existing legal provisions?
11. The proposal is that the panel members are remunerated by the Archbishops' Council on a fee-based arrangement. Documentation will need to be drawn up to cover details such as information sharing etc. If the decision is taken to remunerate the panel members, the Archbishops' Council may like to also explore remunerating the 2014 Declaration Independent Reviewer in the interest of parity.

Towards a legislative process and statutory body

12. The Interim Review Panel will run in parallel to the development of the permanent, statutory reviewing body. The negotiations and navigation through the legislative processes towards a formal framework enshrined in law may take a minimum of two years from the time a policy is agreed, but at this stage this is an estimate. If the 2014 precedent were followed, it would be necessary to enact a Canon that provided for the making of regulations for resolution of disputes. If, as is recommended above, those against whom a complaint could be made is to extend beyond the clergy then a Measure would be required as well or instead of this (as Canons are legally binding on the clergy), but that would not be likely to significantly affect the timescale.
13. An initial estimate of the shortest reasonable timescale for legislation underpinning a formal framework for reviewing complaints and concerns, assuming the policy is agreed at the July meeting of the General Synod, would be:
 - February 2025: first consideration
 - February – July 2025: Revision Committee*
 - July 2025: Revision Stage
 - February 2026: Final Approval
 - July 2026: Measure enacted.

* If possible: it is unusual for a Revision Committee to be able to complete its work between a February and a July group of sessions.
14. It is anticipated that the IRP will either be replaced or will evolve into the formalised statutory body. The legislation could include transitional provision to facilitate this.

Process to appointment of Independent Review Panel

15. The Chair of the panel will be appointed first by the archbishops, via an open application process and in consultation with key stakeholders. The Chair will then be involved in recruiting the rest of the panel members.
16. The appointment of the panel will be made by the archbishops but in consultation with key stakeholders. The appointment of the panel for future membership will be the responsibility of the chair and the archbishops, again in consultation with key stakeholders.
17. The suggestion for the general recruitment process is:
 - a. An open application process where the job is advertised, e.g., to General Synod and in the Church Times, with a person specification and role description. A panel puts together a list of potential names for the archbishops (or archbishops and chair). It could be that the panel interviews as part of the shortlisting process; And
 - b. The LLF Programme Board, the House of Bishops, the Standing Committees of the Houses of Laity and Clergy, and members of General Synod are asked to send through suggestions of names.

Submissions from applicants

18. Applicants would be asked to submit a 1-page CV outlining their relevant experience, along with a cover note of up to 300 words explaining why they are a good candidate for the role. There is the option to require answers to some specific questions as part of the note. For example, a note of their theological tradition, how they would approach being a team with people of differing views to their own, and how they would approach cases brought to the panel.
19. Applications should be sent to Nick Shepherd, LLF Programme Director via email to nick.shepherd@churchofengland.org or post to The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, Church House, Great Smith Street, SW1P 3AZ, marked confidential.

Shortlisting & interview panel

20. There will need to be a panel responsible for shortlisting and interviewing candidates prior to the final shortlist being presented to the archbishops. Care needs to be taken with the make-up of this panel to ensure both a balance. The interview panel would need to be a smaller group with one representative of each of the houses. Suggestions for the panel could include:
 - Prolocutors of the House of Clergy
 - Chairs of the House of Laity
 - 2 representatives from the House of Bishops with differing theological standpoints
 - An independent person
 - A senior NCI officer.

Terms of Reference of the Interim Review Panel for matters relating to Living in Love and Faith (DRAFT)

Establishment of the (interim) Independent Review Panel

1. The interim Independent Review Panel for concerns raised about matters relating to Living and Love and Faith is established by the House of Bishops in accordance with these terms of reference.
2. The members of the Interim Review Panel are appointed by the archbishops, with the concurrence of the Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod. The panel is to be formed of five persons: one Chair and four other members. The membership of the panel should represent a diversity of church traditions and convictions.
3. The Independent Review Panel has been established as an interim measure prior to the establishment of a more formal framework for addressing matters arising from Living in Love and Faith in order to be able to provide reassurance that a range of theological convictions in relation to such matters will be appropriately respected and that those holding different positions are treated ¹?
4. Office holders and others involved are expected to cooperate with the Independent Review Panel's work.

Scope of the Independent Review Panel and consideration of cases

5. The principal aim of the Independent Review Panel is to achieve a resolution, so far as it is reasonably possible to do so, of concerns raised.
6. The Independent Review Panel has been established:
 - i. to review and respond, as it considers appropriate, to concerns (which may be specific or general in nature) raised by or about individuals or Church of England bodies where a relevant office holder or body may have acted inconsistently with [Code of Practice and other details to be included here].
 - ii. To decide whether it should carry out a review in respect of a concern that is raised with the Review Panel.
 - iii. to decide whether a concern in respect of which it has carried out a review is justified, partly justified or unjustified.
 - iv. to produce a written report on each review it has carried out which includes its decision and any recommendations it considers it should make for addressing the concern.
7. The Independent Review Panel will assess concerns it receives and will decide whether to carry out a review. The Review Panel will not necessarily review every concern raised with it.
8. The Independent Review Panel will prioritise cases where:

¹ At the time of writing this draft of the Terms of Reference there is no framework or regulations against which concerns brought before the interim IRP can be judged. As noted, the Code of Practice and Bishops Statement are likely to form the key reference point.

- a) there is significant risk to the interests of the mission of the Church, whether at the local, diocesan or national level; or
- b) there is a potential reasonable claim of loss (not limited to financial loss), suffering or harm to a party.

Raising a concern with the Independent Review Panel

9. A concern may be brought in relation to an office holder or Church of England body in respect of any act or omission relating to the application of the [framework or agreement details to be included here].
10. To raise a concern with the Review Panel:
 - i. Before approaching the Independent Review Panel's Office, those raising a concern about a specific matter should first seek to resolve the matter locally through any applicable appeals processes. N.B. The Pastoral Consultative Group (PCG) is an advisory body available to bishops and clergy that may be able to offer some guidance.
 - ii. Before approaching the Independent Review Panel's Office, those raising a concern must give the office holder or body in question reasonable opportunity to address the concern.
 - iii. The concern should be raised in writing to the Review Panel.
 - iv. If a Church of England body wishes to raise a concern it must pass a formal resolution to that effect.
 - v. The concern should normally be raised within three months of the action or omission in question.
 - vi. Where an applicable appeals process has been followed, the period of three months runs from the conclusion of that process.
 - vii. The concern must succinctly specify:
 - a) The office holder or Church of England body in respect of whom the concern is raised.
 - b) The nature of the act or omission in question.
 - c) The nature of the concern in relation to it.
 - d) The desired outcome or resolution.
 - viii. A copy of the concern should be sent by the person raising the concern to the office holder or body in respect of whom the concern is raised.

Conduct of reviews

11. The Independent Review Panel may, on a case-by-case basis appoint one or more of its members to lead a review but any decisions and recommendations must be agreed by the panel as a whole.
12. If the Independent Review Panel is not unanimously agreed on a decision or proposed recommendation the question is to be decided in accordance with the view of the majority of its members.
13. The Independent Review Panel will issue a report on each concern it reviews.

14. The Independent Review Panel's reports will be published, though the Independent Review Panel may redact certain elements of personal and other information if it considers it necessary or desirable to do so.
15. The Independent Review Panel will not itself take action to implement any recommendations it may make but may consider a subsequent concern about the implementation of a recommendation that it has made.
16. The Independent Review Panel will produce a report to the House of Bishops on the exercise of its functions after the first 6 months of its establishment, and at a frequency to be determined by the House of Bishops thereafter if this interim arrangement continues to be in place.

Exercise of the Independent Review Panel's functions

17. In exercising his or her functions, a member of the Independent Review Panel must:
 - a) act impartially and fairly; and
 - b) have regard to [framework or agreement details to be included here].
18. The term of office for a member of the Independent Review Panel will be three years or until such time as the IRP's functions cease, whichever arises first.
19. Members of the Independent Review Panel may be removed by the archbishops, with the concurrence of the Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod, on grounds of incapacity, misconduct or other good cause.

Responsibilities of all members working as a panel

20. To carry out the Interim Independent Review Panel Terms of Reference. In summary:
 - i. to review and respond, as it considers appropriate, to concerns (which may be specific or general in nature) raised by or about individuals, Church of England bodies where a relevant office holder or body may have acted inconsistently with [framework or agreement details to be included here].
 - ii. To decide whether it should carry out a review in respect of a concern that is raised with the Review Panel.
 - iii. to decide whether a concern in respect of which it has carried out a review is justified, partly justified or unjustified.
 - iv. to produce a written report on each review it has carried out which includes its decision and any recommendations it considers it should make for addressing the concern.
21. The Independent Review Panel is able to exercise its discretion in determining which cases should be reviewed.
22. The Independent Review Panel may consider that an issue is best dealt with by the Pastoral Consultative Group which can offer pastoral advice and guidance.
23. Members may be asked on a case-by-case basis to lead a review but any decisions and recommendations must be agreed by the panel as a whole.
24. To contribute to the Independent Review Panel's annual report to the House of Bishops on the exercising of the Panel's functions.
25. To cooperate with fellow Panel members and to work as a team.

26. Panel members must abide by the National Church Institution (NCI) policies regarding governance, information sharing etc.

Responsibilities of the Chair

27. To convene the Independent Review Panel.
28. To ensure the coherence of the Independent Review Panel.
29. To speak on behalf of and represent the Independent Review Panel where necessary.

Terms of Office

30. Members of the Independent Review Panel will be remunerated by the Archbishops' Council on a fee-based arrangement.
31. The term of office for the Independent Review Panel will be three years or until such time as the Independent Review Panel's functions cease, whichever arises first.
32. Members of the Independent Review Panel may be removed by the archbishops, with the concurrence of the Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod, on grounds of incapacity, misconduct or other good cause.
33. The panel will receive staff support from the National Church Institutions through [role(s) TBD].

Person specification

34. A [communicant Anglican or committed Christian] or of good standing.
35. Willing and able to work as a team with those holding differing views and convictions on the Panel.
36. Substantive experience of conflict resolution and/or mediation.
37. Ability to maintain good relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders.
38. Respect for and understanding of diversity of church backgrounds and theological convictions.
39. Excellent communication: speaks and writes clearly, listens to others and able to interpret messages from others and respond appropriately.
40. Good theological understanding.
41. Ability to handle a varying workload throughout the year.
42. Owing to the potential for conflicts of interests, it is not appropriate for incumbent clergy to be a member of the Independent Review Panel, however those retired or without incumbency are eligible.

Annex C

A note on the legal position

1. The proposal that the House of Bishops should commend the Prayers of Love and Faith Outline Services ('standalone services') for a trial period is put forward following discussions in the LLF working groups. The change in approach which it represents was taken on policy grounds. There has been no change in the legal advice.
2. The relevant legal advice received by the House of Bishops was set out in GS 2328 in November 2023 and in GS 2346 in February 2024. The same considerations that applied to commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith Resources Section would apply to commendation of the Outline Services.
3. In [GS 2328](#) (November 2023) the House of Bishops set out its intention to commend the Prayers of Love and Faith Resource Section. Detailed consideration of the issues was set out in Annex A. At paragraph 7, the House said:

We have considered carefully the requirement in Canon B 5 that "all variations in forms of service and all forms of service used under this Canon shall be reverent and seemly and shall be neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter".
4. The detailed consideration of that requirement was described as follows:
 10. We are aware that members of Synod and others have questioned the use of prayers and other resources for same-sex couples who have entered into a same-sex marriage, arguing that such use would be contrary to, or indicative of a departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in an essential matter. We have therefore considered legal advice in reaching our view that use of the PLF Resource Section would be compliant with that canonical requirement. The legal advice we received set out both sides of the argument. It also explained that we had to exercise our legally and theologically-informed judgement in coming to a view on whether proposed prayers and other material met the requirements as to doctrine that are set out in Canon B 5 (and in other places in the Canons concerned with public worship).
 11. In the light of the legal and theological advice we have received, we consider the following points to be significant. The PLF Resource Section does not treat those couples who have entered a same-sex civil marriage any differently from the way they treat a same-sex couple who are in a civil partnership or who have not acquired any formal civil status for their relationship. The use of the PLF Resource Section for a couple who have entered into a civil same-sex marriage does not therefore imply that their civil status is something that the Church considers distinguishes the couple from other same-sex couples who wish to dedicate their life together to God. The materials contained in the PLF Resource Section are not a celebration of a couple's civil same-sex marriage. They are for praying with and for two people who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God.
 12. It is our intention, when we commend the PLF Resource Section, that ministers who wish to use them may do so without there being any assumption that a couple are or are not in an active sexual relationship. Again, we have considered relevant theological and canonical issues in coming to that position.
 13. The Church's doctrine remains as set out in Canon B 30 (Of Holy Matrimony); we have been clear that we have no intention of changing that doctrine. We also note that the

Church's teaching on sexual relations has been treated as being part of the Church's doctrine of marriage. We are not proposing to change that teaching.

14. We are therefore offering the PLF Resource Section as a form of pastoral provision. The theological rationale for doing that is set out in detail in Annex H. In summary, our reasoning is as follows:

- i. The PLF are a type of legitimate pastoral provision whereby the Church recognises the reality of people's lives and seeks to respond in ways that affirms what is good, and pray for growth towards God.
- ii. Pastoral provision recognises that there is currently uncertainty about the outcome of the church's discernment in relation to same-sex relationships and acknowledges a "provisionality of our knowledge and responses in ways that err on the side of grace rather than judgement".
- iii. To introduce a consistent way of pastoral provision would be to stand in a long line of the pastoral practice of finding ways to help people move forward in holiness in a world that falls far short of ideals in every area, without giving up on the idea of the ideal altogether. This would bring out more explicitly the principle that grace is a central concept in Christian doctrine, which interacts strongly with the pastoral outworkings of doctrines like the doctrine of marriage.
- iv. The PLF acknowledge and respect the doctrine of marriage. They bear witness to the norm of Holy Matrimony by affirming very clear goods that bear a family resemblance to the goods of marriage: stability, faithfulness, exclusive, lifelong commitment, fruitfulness, mutual nurture and work for the flourishing of each partner and all those with whom a couple comes into contact.
- v. The PLF do not seek to simulate marriage, or equalise these relationships, or pretend that our Church has made a decision to extend marriage to same-sex couples. But they do discern and affirm what is good, and pray for God's presence and blessing over the people within the relationship. They are 'prayers on the way': the way of people seeking to grow in God, but also the way of a Church seeking to discern how to respond well to the diversity of the Body, and to the complexity of a rapidly changing social context.

15. In short, the theological basis for pastoral provision is that it is a pastoral outworking for a time of uncertainty that respects the Church of England's unchanged doctrine of marriage, including the aspects of that doctrine that are concerned with sexual intimacy. On that basis, we have concluded that making the PLF available for same-sex couples without there being an assumption as to their sexual relationships would not be contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England.

16. However, we have been advised that whether liturgical provision is "indicative of a departure" from doctrine poses a different question from whether it "is contrary to" that doctrine. It includes consideration of what a liturgical provision indicates about the Church's understanding of its doctrine and what that doctrine requires.

17. We have also been advised that it would be difficult to say that making the PLF available for same-sex couples without there being an assumption as to their sexual relationships was not indicative of any departure from the Church's doctrine. Existing pastoral statements of the House of Bishops (issued in 2005, 2014 and 2019) state that because some same-sex couples will be "living consistently with the teaching of the Church, others not", it would "not be right to produce an authorised public liturgy in connection with the registering of [civil partnerships/same-sex marriages] and "that clergy of the Church of England should not provide services of blessing for those who [register a civil partnership/enter a same sex

marriage]”. If the PLF are to be available for same-sex couples without there being an assumption as to their sexual relationships, there would have been a change in the Church’s formal position on what its doctrine of marriage, and the place of sex within it, did and did not preclude in terms of public worship. Such a change might indicate a departure from the previous understanding that the Church’s teaching precluded public worship being offered for a same sex couple who were or might be in a sexually active relationship.

18. If that is so, it is necessary to go on to consider whether that departure would be indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England “in any essential matter”.

19. The words “in any essential matter” were included in the draft Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure as introduced in the General Synod (and are now contained in the 1974 Measure as enacted). On considering a proposal that those words be omitted from the draft Measure on the basis that they “seemed otiose and it would be difficult to decide what matters were essential”, the Revision Committee for the Measure ultimately decided to retain them on the following basis: If they were omitted it became equally difficult to determine what issues were or were not contrary to or indicative of any departure from the doctrine of the Church of England. The words ‘in any essential matter’ ensured that there was a proper degree of flexibility so that new insights into doctrine compatible with the general Anglican approach could be reflected in forms of worship and decisions of the Synod.

20. The explanatory memorandum for the Amending Canon which implemented the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974 (GS 129) explained the words as follows: Attention is drawn [in Canon B 2] to the last four words ‘in any essential matter’, which are new. They enable the Synod to make small changes in matters which are regarded as doctrinal, provided that the essential doctrines of the Church of England are safeguarded. This formula is also used in the revised versions of Canons B 4 and B 5. The words used in the present Canons seem to preclude any changes at all, which appears unduly rigid and arguably does not accord with existing practice.

21. In considering whether what we are proposing would be a departure from doctrine “in any essential matter” we have therefore asked ourselves the following questions: i. Would making the PLF available in those circumstances represent a proper degree of flexibility (a “small change ... in a matter regarded as doctrinal”) so that new insights into doctrine can be reflected in forms of worship? ii. Are those new insights compatible with the general Anglican approach? iii. Are the essential doctrines of the Church of England safeguarded?

22. In considering those questions, we have had careful regard to the theological rationale for the making of pastoral provision which includes the following:

- that it is not intended to change the Church of England’s doctrine of marriage;
- that the Church’s teaching on sexual activity is regarded as part of that doctrine; • that the PLF are intended to recognise and respect that doctrine;
- that the PLF affirm the goods in same-sex relationships, including stability, faithfulness, exclusive, lifelong commitment etc.;
- that the PLF say nothing about sex but many same-sex couples will be in active sexual relationships.

23. We consider that what is envisaged by way of pastoral provision – which involves acknowledging and celebrating what is good in same-sex relationships even if the Church is unable to commend every aspect of some relationships – is a new insight into doctrine that can be reflected in forms of worship and that doing so represents a proper degree of flexibility.

24. We consider that the new insight is compatible with the general Anglican approach. The theological rationale set out in Annex H for making this pastoral provision explains why that is the case, and in particular how this pastoral provision would stand in a long line of the pastoral practice of finding ways to help people move forward in holiness in a world that falls far short of any ideals, without giving up on the idea of the ideal altogether.

25. We consider that the essential doctrines of the Church of England are safeguarded. The PLF do not seek to simulate marriage, or pretend that the Church has made a decision to extend marriage to same-sex couples. But they do discern and affirm what is good, and pray for God's presence and blessing over the people within the relationship.

26. We have therefore come to the view that, in so far as making the PLF available for couples in an active sexual relationship does involve any departure from doctrine, it nevertheless does not involve a departure from doctrine "in any essential matter", and that doing so is compatible with the relevant canonical requirements.

5. Relevant legal advice on commendation was summarised in Annex A to [GS 2346](#) in February 2024 as follows:

Commendation

Canon B 5

The original approach suggested in GS 2289 was for the full suite of Prayers of Love and Faith to be made available for individual ministers to use at their own discretion under Canon B 5.2. In this situation, it is the local minister having the cure of souls who elects to use the particular form of service. The House of Bishops might give a view that such forms of service are capable of being used at the discretion of the minister by commending them, but this has no legal effect. It does not amount to authorisation.

There are several risks with this route: firstly, commendation does not definitively determine the question of whether a form of service is lawful. This would leave ministers offering these services open to the possibility of a complaint being brought against them individually under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 or the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. The pastoral impact of such an occurrence, the distress caused to the couple, the minister and parish, as well as the wider reputational risk must be considered.

There would be no obligation for ministers to discuss the use of the standalone services with their PCC, and, save for that already provided for in the Canons, no restrictions on ministers adapting the forms of service, or creating their own material in preference to using the commended PLF Resource Section or outline orders of service.

6. The same legal considerations apply to commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith Outline Services.
7. Annex A of GS 2289 also summarised legal advice given to the House of Bishops about the experimental use of the Prayers of Love and Faith Outline Services under Canon B 5A. That summary included the following:

Canon B 5A provides for the archbishops, after consultation with the House of Bishops, to authorise a form of service "for experimental use for a period specified by them on such terms and in such places or parishes as they may designate".

The term "form of service" when used in the Canons includes any matter to be used as part of a service and is not restricted in its meaning to entire services (see Canon B 1.3). It can therefore include prayers that are intended to be used within other, previously authorised, services such as Holy Communion or a Service of the Word. The form of service must be one which has been "prepared with a view to its submission to the General Synod for approval by the Synod under Canon B 2". The purpose of the experimental period is intended to inform

the subsequent consideration of the form of service which is proposed for approval under Canon B 2.

Any form of service approved by the General Synod must “be such as in the opinion of the General Synod is neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter” (Canon B 2.1). Therefore, a form of service authorised for experimental use under Canon B 5A must be one which the archbishops, having consulted the House of Bishops, consider meets that requirement even though this condition is not set out in Canon B 5A itself. The period for which a form of service is authorised for experimental use must be specified by the archbishops when the authorisation is given.

...

Canon B 5A has not before been used to introduce new rites to the worship of the Church in the manner that is proposed by the PLF standalone services. As this would be a new (and, for some, controversial) use of the Canon there remains a considerable risk of legal challenge in the courts.

8. It was further noted that the better interpretation of Canons B 2 and B 5A was that that an experimental period of use under Canon B 5A would need to be completed before the authorisation process under Canon B 2 was commenced. Annex A of GS 2289 said:

In the past, experimental uses under Canon B 5A have all come to an end before the House of Bishops has settled the final text for First Consideration by the General Synod, having amended or refined it in the light of the feedback received from those who have used it experimentally. There is a medium to high risk that conducting an overlapping Canon B 5A and a Canon B 2 process would be successfully challenged in the courts.

The advice from the Legal Office is that, reading Canon B 5A and Canon B 2 together, the better interpretation of the text is that the experimental period under Canon B 5A must come to an end before the form of service is submitted for approval under Canon B 2.