



Tuesday, 08 August 2017

Dear DEF members and members of networks represented on CEEC

In February of this year (after the January CEEC meeting), Stephen Hofmeyr, CEEC Secretary, wrote to DEF Chairs and Secretaries (you can find the letter on our website) providing information on CEEC's conversations around human sexuality and the challenges at that time. You will be aware that much water has gone under the bridge since then and we are therefore writing to offer update and comment.

The February letter was sent immediately after the House of Bishops report (GS2055) was published. It described how the Officers were "heartened to read that the House of Bishops is proposing no change to the Church of England's doctrinal position on marriage and sexual relations and that no liturgical prayers for same sex relationships, authorised or commended, should be produced". Much work was done by evangelical bishops to secure this outcome and we are grateful for that and that this remains the Church's official position.

We cannot, however, ignore the fact that since then this position has been under constant and serious attack. There have been several disappointing developments leading to widening and deepening concerns among evangelicals:

- A small majority of the House of Clergy refused to "take note" of the report and so, although the majority of General Synod members wished to do so, it was not taken note of by Synod,
- The Archbishops' letter following this vote left many unclear as to what was meant by "radical Christian inclusion" and has led to many believing there has been not only a change in tone but a change in direction,
- A number of bishops have openly signalled their support for changes in teaching and/or practice and the Bishop of Liverpool became a Patron of Liverpool Pride,
- Behaviour and decisions at the July General Synod, including the rejection of good amendments tabled by evangelicals to the motions on conversion therapy and welcoming transgender people, have further heightened concerns,
- The Scottish Episcopal Church has changed its marriage canon and now permits its clergy to preside at same-sex marriages.

Alongside these it is important to note a number of recent developments which have brought encouragement to many evangelicals around the country. These include the consecration of Andy Lines (who represents Crosslinks on CEEC) as a missionary bishop of ACNA, supported by GAFCON and many Global South Primates; the planned involvement of many evangelicals in the groups working on

the House of Bishops Teaching Document, overseen by Bishop Christopher Cocksworth; and the call for a renewed orthodox Anglicanism gaining signatures online.

In the midst of this CEEC continues to endorse the theology of human sexuality and biblical authority offered in 'Guarding the Deposit' (GTD). We are also clear as a Council that these matters are not able to be treated as adiaphora but are of prime importance. We would encourage you to read and raise awareness of GTD (both the full text and a helpful two-page summary are on our website).

The developments of the last six months have also highlighted the prescience and importance of the second part of GTD in which a series of structural possibilities are explored. We thank God that the desired first option of maintaining current teaching and practice has, thankfully, not yet been formally rejected. However, there are many signs that the Church could reject it by embracing either the proposals of the Pilling Report or an even fuller acceptance that permanent, faithful same-sex relationships are a legitimate form of Christian discipleship.

CEEC Officers hear the call for a clearer and louder voice in support of the traditional teaching of the church on marriage and same sex relationships, not least from evangelical bishops. Without being able to be explicit, it is important to say that behind the scenes a number of initiatives are being planned, which hopefully will bring welcome reassurances and send clear messages to the evangelical constituency and the wider C of E and the even wider Anglican Communion.

More explicitly, the Council is working on two major areas. Firstly, we are seeking to help the Church of England to maintain and be confident in biblical teaching. We are positively exploring how we might contribute to the proposed Teaching Document being worked on. Furthermore, we are continuing to support and facilitate meetings in the dioceses/regions to encourage, teach and resource a biblical orthodoxy in matters of gender, identity and sexuality.

Secondly, and whilst we are committed to praying and working for a renewal of orthodox vision within the C of E, we are being realistic and thinking through what "visible differentiation" might look like, should the Church depart from its current teaching, whether in law or in fact, and make such differentiation necessary. We are also aware of the need to continue to work together and support one another as evangelicals who, in different contexts, may, at times, be called to differentiate from the wider church to varying degrees and in different forms.

In both these areas we welcome any input from you.

In the face of recent developments in the Church of England it is important to remember and be encouraged by the fact that the overwhelming majority of Anglicans worldwide share both our positive vision and our concerns about Anglicanism in England and the wider British Isles. As evangelicals in the Church of England we seek to work with them and ask you to pray particularly for the Primates in advance of the Primates' Meeting in early October and for those working to prepare for Lambeth 2020 and GAFCON 2018.

In recent turbulent months many of us have been struggling to read the signs of the times and hear what God is calling us to do. This looks like it will be our situation for some time to come. At various points we are likely to find ourselves saying, with Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20.12, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you". As we keep our eyes on God, confident in his grace and power

and truth, please pray for wisdom for all those in positions of leadership in the Communion, the Church of England, and among evangelicals, including those serving on CEEC:

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:2-5).*

Yours in His service

The Rt. Revd. Julian Henderson (CEEC President)

The Revd. Hugh Palmer (CEEC Chair)

The Revd. George Curry (CEEC Treasurer)

Stephen Hofmeyr (CEEC Secretary)