

Dear DEF chairs and secretaries

Greetings – I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing following the annual Church of England Evangelical Council residential held at High Leigh on 11-12 January 2017, and in particular to update you regarding our conversations around human sexuality and the challenges we currently face in this regard.

It will encourage you to hear that there was overwhelming support for the theology on human sexuality and the authority of Scripture as contained in 'Guarding the Deposit' (available on the CEEC website and copy attached) and, in particular, a shared conviction that the issue of human sexuality is not adiaphora, i.e. not a secondary matter. It would be helpful if this conviction could be articulated and nurtured more widely amongst evangelicals through your networks. CEEC commends the document for further discussion.

It has become apparent that 'Guarding the Deposit' might be a challenging read for people who prefer shorter documents and do not consider themselves theologically literate. It is therefore CEEC's intention to produce a short 2-page summary for wider circulation – and we will let you have copies of the summary as soon as it is available.

You will know that over the last two years a number of meetings were held regionally to offer and explore an orthodox perspective on human sexuality. I'm pleased to be able to inform you that the CEEC has offered its support for a further round of meetings – building on the previous round and working with you and others placed locally/regionally to provide what might be appropriate in your diocese or region. If this is something you feel would be of help to your members and others in your diocese or region please do get in touch with the chair of the CEEC Working Group, John Dunnett, who would be pleased to have a conversation with you about this.

The CEEC has also given its support for a proposal to produce a package of resources to help evangelicals in the Church of England to know how best to deal with sensitive pastoral matters and difficult structural relationships in the area of human sexuality. We will keep you informed of progress.

As you are no doubt aware, last Friday the House of Bishops issued a report on Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations (GS 2055). The Officers are 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. This commitment, together with fresh work on four key areas, will shape a framework for the Church of England's future prayer, reflection and teaching. That further work means of course that the Church of England has not definitely come to a firm mind on pastoral practice and discipline and will continue to explore what 'maximum freedom' within the existing laws actually means. This will be tested out at Synod in a fortnight's time. In the weeks ahead, we will be consulting within the evangelical constituency in relation to the whole of this report and its potential consequences. Please do not hesitate to share with us the responses of your members. We will be in touch again when we have more to report.

If you have any questions arising out of the above, please do not hesitate to ask.

Yours in His service,

Stephen Hofmeyr (CEEC Secretary)

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