

Christians unite to campaign for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality in Church of England

A group of Christians have come together to form the LGBTI Mission, which will campaign for the full acceptance and affirmation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people within the Church of England.

The group, which is made up of LGBTI people and straight allies, including both clergy and lay people, will seek to remove all barriers to full participation for LGBTI people within the church. It launches during LGBT History Month, which this year is focused on the theme of Religion, Belief and Philosophy.

The priorities of the LGBTI Mission are centred on three key pillars:

- Living: the belief that all LGBTI people, heterosexual friends and family, should be welcomed and affirmed by the Church of England
- Loving: the belief that God is love, and that life-long, faithful, stable same-sex relationships, and the relationships of those who undergo gender transition, should be celebrated by the Church of England
- Serving: the belief that God calls LGBTI people to serve the world through the Church of England, and their ministries should be recognised and authorised

Within these pillars, the Group has nine concrete objectives that it will be working to achieve, which will deliver positive outcomes for LGBTI people within the Church of England. These include ensuring that LGBTI people are never denied access to baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion and funerals, as well as allowing those in same-sex marriages to become clergy.

Simon Sarmiento, Chair of the LGBTI Mission, said: “We believe that now is the time for the Church of England to practice what it preaches and show love towards its LGBTI neighbours. Often an assumption is made that there is a disconnect between LGBTI people and people of faith, when in fact we know that many LGBTI people are religious, and many faith groups support LGBTI equality. We’ve seen the church make huge strides towards equality in recent years, most notably through the 2014 legislation enabling women to become bishops, and it’s now essential that LGBTI equality is similarly cemented in our institution. We know that this is what most people in the Church of England want.

“We believe that each of the asks we’ve outlined is achievable and, frankly, essential. We hope that others who feel passionate about equality will help and join our campaign. People are people and should be treated equally and fairly; this is a fundamental part of what the church teaches us and it’s time we took tangible steps to ensure full acceptance and affirmation of LGBTI people.”

Members of the LGBTI Mission include: Simon Sarmiento, Vicky Beeching, Tracey Byrne, Canon Giles Goddard, Ruth Harley, Savi Hensman, Revd Chris Newlands, Revd Canon Steven Saxby, Jeremy Timm and Bishop Alan Wilson.

Ends

For more information, please contact Simon Sarmiento, Chair of the LGBTI Mission, 07906 445 695, or visit www.LGBTIMission.org

To get involved with the LGBTI Mission, please go to www.LGBTIMission.org

About The LGBTI Mission

The LGBTI Mission was established by the LGBTI Anglican Coalition to work towards the full acceptance and affirmation of LGBTI people within the life of the Church of England. Over the next five years and beyond, it will do all it can to remove the barriers to full participation by LGBTI people, and it will bring together organisations, allies and friends, including other LGBTI groups.

Within its priorities of Living, Loving and Serving, it has nine key strands of work, which together will result in positive outcomes for LGBTI people in the Church of England:

Living – What we need:

1. Official recognition and acceptance of theological diversity within the church on issues of human sexuality and gender variance
2. The fostering of a culture of safety for LGBTI children and young people within the church, its schools and its institutions
3. A rigorous affirmation that the rites of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion and funerals should not be denied to anyone on the grounds of their own or others' sexuality or gender identity.

Loving – What we need:

4. Publication and endorsement by the Church of England of devotional prayers and other materials for LGBTI people
5. Liturgical materials for use in church after civil partnerships, the marriage of same-sex couples and to affirm change of name and welcome after gender transition
6. Parishes that wish to do so should be able to celebrate same-sex marriages and to mark the continuation of a marriage when a partner transitions gender

Serving – what we need:

7. Allow those in same-sex marriages to enter the ordination process
8. Revoke all diocesan or national policies that discriminate against LGBTI ordinands
9. Establish national policy that marital status is not a barrier in any appointment to authorised ministry, including lay ministry and episcopacy