

Let's talk about love and faith



Our Living in Love and Faith advocate **Canon Kathryn Percival** previews some significant chats

ELVIS Presley's 1968 plea for 'A little less conversation' has been used in many less romantic contexts since, including Mitt Romney's 2008 US presidential bid. But in a Church famous for talking over cups of tea, it can seem singularly appropriate.

So, faced with issues around sexuality, identity, marriage and relationships, which threaten to divide us, is a conversation really a good idea? That was my reaction, at least, when I heard about the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process.

The process arose after the refusal by General Synod to 'take note' of a document on sexuality produced by the House of Bishops, in 2017. It was clear from this reaction that something more than a traditional teaching document was needed. Since then, the LLF project has involved study and conversation among people from a wide variety of backgrounds, and with a broad spectrum of views.

Three years of work, up to 2020, produced a library of resources: a book, podcasts, videos in which we are invited to get to know a rich diversity of people, and the five-session course, which is at the heart of LLF and which gives us the chance to study scripture and have conversations with

each other about these questions which affect us so deeply.

These conversations are given a framework by the Church's Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together, whose aim is to help us create 'braver, safer spaces' in which we can speak, listen, and disagree well with each other, over these and indeed any other issues.

'We are invited to inhabit a human, respectful and honest process'

For those of us who like pressing on towards goals, holding open these spaces, without knowing where the conversation will land, will be challenging. But we are being invited to inhabit a radically human, respectful and honest process: if we can even try to have these brave, safe, conversations, we will be witnessing powerfully to the life and love we have in Jesus Christ.

Experiencing the resources and the course for myself with our diocesan LLF steering group has been both demanding and moving. The resources have been described by one commentator as 'grown-up,' and they are genuinely impressive, as is the

scholarship, commitment, and discernment of the people who have produced them.

The space we created with the help of the Pastoral Principles enabled us to be honest and vulnerable with each other – so much so, that the end of our meetings has left us with a sense of loss, and of gratitude for what we have shared. My view has shifted from that initial eye-roll to a sense of anticipation and hope.

We are aiming to run at least one LLF course in every deanery, and parishes and other groups are welcome to organise their own courses. We will be offering training in the autumn for anyone who would like to facilitate a group. We have until April to have these conversations, and I would invite you to join in if you can.

To find out more, visit the Church of England's LLF pages on www.churchofengland.org/LLF. Here, you can sign up for the LLF Learning Hub, and obtain all the resources free of charge.

Our diocesan LLF pages are on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/LLF, where local courses will be listed. If you have any questions or want to talk things through with me, please don't hesitate to get in touch on kathryn.percival@portsmouthcathedral.org.uk