**PRAYERS OF LOVE AND FAITH, December 2023**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I’m writing to all clergy, LLMs, clergy with Permission to Officiate and churchwardens, a few hours after the House of Bishops has commended the *Prayers of Love and Faith**(PLF).*These *are*for use in private pastoral situations, but also in the context of regular worship by licensed ministers, lay or ordained, as well as those who hold the bishop’s Permission to Officiate, under the authority of the minister with the Cure of Souls and after consultation with their PCC (1.1.7 of the Pastoral Guidance; see also 1.1.8). Prayers can be used from **Sunday 17th December 2023**– but obviously there will need to be time for consultation with the PCC in the case of public use. Such a conversationcould helpfully draw on the Pastoral Principles, which you can find [here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/general-synod/house-bishops/pastoral-principles)

Please read the *Prayers of Love and Faith* themselves, which you canaccess [here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/prayers-of-love-and-faith.pdf); and also the Pastoral Guidance, which is attached and can also be read [here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/living-in-love-and-faith-pastoral-guidance.pdf). You will see that the Pastoral Guidance documentalso includesa number of sections in italics. A word of explanation is required: the italicised guidance sections are included for information, but do not relate to the commended prayers. Rather, they relate to standalone services, which are yet to be trialled or authorised for use.It was felt that the inclusion of the italicised sections would be useful, and give an idea of what guidancefor standalone services might look like.

No licensedminister, lay or ordained, or holding the bishop’s Permission to Officiate should feel under pressure to use these Prayersagainst their conscience. For me, and for my colleagues in the House of Bishops, conscience is paramount. There will be some of youwho think, no doubt, that the step which the House of Bishops hasnow taken ismisguided at best and unfaithfulat worst. Whereas, for others, also brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, this step may bereceived as a significant moment in honouring theholiness discerned in permanent, faithful, and stable same-sex relationships.

Wherever you are on this spectrum of Christian conviction and practice, be assured that I honour your integrity, witness and conscience. I continue to believe that by grace, working through faith, Christ has made us onein baptism, by water and Spirit. I will work to ensure that the voices and ministries of all God’s people are treasured and valued within our diocesan community of communities.

I believe that a Church whichwalks together, in spite of profound disagreement, can be an authentic witness to the reconciliation wrought in Christ. For me, your brother and bishop, a sign of the Gospel is offered to the world as Christians livetogether in reconciled diversity and,no doubt, at great personal cost. We will keep in touch as matters develop and evolve.

Please do pray for me as I pray for you. Withlove in Advent.

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