

Executive summary

This paper provides Synod with an update on work on Living in Love and Faith (LLF) following the July 2024 motion on an outline proposal, as set out in [GS 2358](#). A fuller update on the work will be given as a presentation to Synod, followed by questions. There is no debate on LLF at this group of sessions.

A separate paper (GS Misc1407) outlines progress on the work undertaken by the ERG. This is accompanied by the publication of previous work undertaken in support of LLF (GS Misc 1406).

Overview of work being undertaken

Following the Synod motion in July 2025, the LLF team, Working Groups and the Episcopal Reference Group (ERG) of the Faith and Order Commission (FAOC) have been working on two parallel areas of work with the following aims:

- Allowing the House of Bishops and the General Synod to vote on a complete package comprising both proposals for ‘bespoke’ (standalone) Prayers of Love and Faith, and also appropriate pastoral reassurance, with clarity on the theological underpinning of these proposals.
- Allowing the House of Bishops to agree a timetable for consideration of the question of clergy entering same-sex civil marriages. Any decision on such a timetable will be informed by work being undertaken by the ERG on any doctrinal issues this question raises. Any decision on a timetable would also likely need to be discussed at a General Synod, congruent with what it outlines.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken in each of these areas. This paper provides an update specific to work on the LLF proposal. A separate paper (GS Misc 1407) outlines progress on the work undertaken by the ERG. This is accompanied by the publication of previous work undertaken in support of LLF (GS Misc 1406).

With respect to work on the LLF proposal, we now have a substantive outline of what could be a Code of Practice (CoP) for Pastoral Reassurance (PR) through Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM). We also have an outline of redrafted guidance for the use of the PLF, including in bespoke services. This work has involved a very significant time investment by many people through the autumn. I am constantly amazed that people are willing to give so much of their time and energy to this work. I hope that I can confidently relay the thanks of the General Synod to all involved, many of whom are Synod members, as well as to staff and volunteers supporting this process.

Both the outline CoP for DEM and the outline guidance are very much *draft* documents to build on the outline proposal introduced in [GS 2358](#). They outline a “Possible Code of Practice” together with “Possible Pastoral Guidance”. Further work is needed on a Bishops’ Statement that will be needed as part of this proposal. In addition, the LLF team will be actively seeking feedback from diocesan synods and other groups over the coming months to further scrutinise and refine the approach and detail. In this session of General Synod, we are therefore offering the work we have done so far, in the hope that Synod members will tell us what they think – through questions during the formal business of Synod, at our fringe meeting, and through feedback sent to the team.

This gives further time for the proposals to be considered in dioceses and for feedback to be collated and integrated. We hope that diocesan synods might consider the work we have done so far; though this would not amount to a formal consultation of diocesan synods as laid down by Standing Orders for some types of Synod business.

Our initial hope was that we might be able to undertake this in time for this proposal to be formally considered at July 2025 Synod. However, the House of Bishops has asked the LLF Programme Board and Team to extend this timetable, so that a formal decision on a proposal might follow at a subsequent group of sessions. The House of Bishops considered that additional time may be needed to ensure that the two strands of work highlighted above are more fully integrated and aligned in such a proposal. This view was expressed by members of the House of Bishops representing a range of views on LLF.

To expand on this slightly, it is now clearer that a timetable for consideration of the question of clergy entering same-sex civil marriages cannot be outlined and agreed upon by the House of Bishops before July 2025. This is largely because the House of Bishops will want to digest and consider the conclusions of the ERG's work to inform its consideration of what sort of process would be needed for this question to be addressed. The intention remains that this work will be undertaken in time for the House of Bishops to discuss it at their May 2025 meeting. However, an undertaking to have clarity by July 2025 does not seem prudent at this point. A further meeting of the House of Bishops could be needed and/or the outcome of any decision might have a consequent impact on the overall package of proposals.

Delays to the LLF proposals are understandably incredibly upsetting and frustrating. For many, this delay extends once again what has already been a protracted journey towards inclusion and pastoral provision for our LGBTQI+ brothers and sisters. I too am frustrated by such a further extension. As Lead Bishop for LLF, I would have preferred to be in a position where we could have sought a decision in July on the direction of LLF, including the introduction of the PLF in bespoke services alongside a form of Pastoral Reassurance based on Delegated Episcopal Ministry. However, I also understand that with slightly more time, we can improve the full package of proposals to include the question of clergy in same sex marriage. The theological work for this vitally important issue is under way. Our hope is that we can provide a meaningful update to Synod by the summer, with a decision made as soon as possible at a subsequent group of sessions.

[Behaviours as we continue with LLF](#)

Our engagement with the Working Groups and wider Stakeholders over these past months has enabled constructive conversation across significant theological differences. What I hear from people on all sides of debate is that we are all seeking and praying for a way forward that both respects our profound theological differences, whilst helping us to navigate a path through them. I hope therefore that the extra time we sense we need may help us find a way through this current impasse.

There can be little doubt that we are now working in an even more challenging environment. While Bishop Justin's resignation as Archbishop was not directly related to LLF, much of the commentary referenced wider grievances about process and content of current changes in the Church of England (this is not a comment on the validity of those grievances, simply that they were stated). So, accepting that some of these concerns have been around for a long time, and are a contributing factor to our

current challenges, we must now pay serious attention to issues of power, trust, honesty, and transparency. This includes all three Houses of General Synod.

So, at the risk of (1) stating the obvious, and (2) overstepping my remit, I want to suggest that this will involve:

1. **Humility.** As Lead Bishop, I want to offer an apology for those elements of the process which have caused hurt to people across the spectrum of views on LLF. This has left some people questioning their place within the church, and for this, I am deeply sorry. Unfortunately, this is a reflection of disagreements that exist within bodies such as the House of Bishops, FAOC, and the LLF Programme Board and therefore it has been extremely challenging to agree processes and timescales. However, I hope we can all commit to learning and doing what we can to ensure good process going forward.
2. **Honesty.** I hope we can all agree to renounce all attempts to subvert the process or use our power to override agreed motions of Synod.
3. **Transparency.** As the LLF Team, we will seek to be as open as possible with Synod and the wider church about the decision-making process and the work being done by staff and working groups.
4. **Ensure theology and legal advice is woven into all our work.** Although we have done a lot of theology as part of the LLF process, we, the LLF Team, know that we must 'show our working' i.e. show how our decisions have been / are being shaped by theological reflection on the specific issues under consideration.
5. **Relationships and a commitment to work together across our differences:** I hope that we can acknowledge the depth of our disagreements AND make a commitment to working together. This is about both unity and mission – “unity matters – it really, really matters” – and this is about the world knowing that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father (John 17:23). So, if we are to continue to be a Christian presence in every community, confidently proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, then we have to commit to working together.

+Martyn Snow

Lead Bishop for LLF

Overview of proposal documentation

The following documents are final drafts of work undertaken with the working groups established in 2024 (see [here](#) for further details and terms of reference). The documents are a tentative attempt to give a picture of what a complete package of proposals (PLF + Pastoral Reassurance) might look like. These have been developed with iterative theological work, which has now been formally outlined in GS Misc 1407. The concept and initial framing of the nine-thesis presented in GS Misc 1406 was also presented to working groups. This, and further material from the ongoing ERG work, will be referenced to in more detail as the proposal is developed.

It may be helpful for members to review the outline proposal in [GS 2358](#) as this gives the background to what is being sought in introducing a wider use of the PLF alongside additional Pastoral Reassurance.

It should also be noted that this package will then need to be tested over a three-year period. Only then, might we be in a position to say that the Church has reached a genuine settlement on LLF. Attention is given to this period of discernment in the Pastoral Guidance. This will be further added to in the coming months.

Part A - Possible Code of Practice

A very diverse Working Group has done a lot of work developing the detail of this. We hope it gives real clarity both on the possibilities and challenges of the approach of regional Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM). The Working Group and Programme Board believe this is deliverable, but we don't underestimate the level of disruption involved.

Part B - Possible Pastoral Guidance

Again, a diverse Working Group has spent a lot of time on the additional material now added to this. It is not yet complete (further work will be done ahead of February's Synod), but we hope it gives enough clarity for people to have a reasonable sense of what will be involved in implementation.

Part C - Working Group Commentary

For both the 'Possible Code of Practice' and the 'Possible Pastoral Guidance' there is a commentary documents which explain the points of disagreement and agreement within the Working Groups. Unsurprisingly, neither group was of one mind on the content of the papers – they simply seek to represent the majority view – so we assured both groups that a commentary would be given to Synod to explain this.

Documents not yet included

Possible Bishops' Statement

The one element that we have not been able to deliver is the Bishops' Statement. A Working Group has met through the autumn and after considerable discussion, three possible versions of a Statement were considered. However, significant concerns were expressed about all three and neither the Working Group nor the Programme Board felt it right to press the House of Bishops to agree a Statement at this moment in time. We still feel that a Statement will be needed to provide an overarching narrative to the

proposals, but we can return to this in May. It may also be the case that some sort of covering letter will be needed after July's Synod when the House can then say, "in view of the decision taken by General Synod, we are writing to the whole Church to say..."

Vocations and Ministry Guidance

As yet, there is no update from this Working Group, largely because their work is part of the second area outlined above (clergy in same-sex civil marriages). The Group has met and started to consider the implications of such a change but until the ERG has completed its work on this area, the V&M Group cannot do much more.

Next Steps for gathering feedback

After General Synod we will be asking all diocesan synods (and other bodies e.g. Bishops' Councils) for feedback on these proposals. This feedback will be used to further develop the proposal. We are not asking diocesan synods to formally vote on the proposals, but to provide input on the range of views around whether it is 'workable' as a way of navigating the differences that exist in the introduction of the PLF.

We believe that good feedback could be gained in a one hour or 90-minute session. However, longer might be needed if the makeup of a diocesan synod is new and there have not been previous conversations on LLF.

Alongside the outline documents for the proposal which will be presented to the General Synod, we will also provide three key resources for these consultation conversations alongside suggestions of how this might be facilitated.

First, an explainer video and 'leaflet' on the proposal and what it is seeking to achieve. This will include some of the basic theological underpinning as well as the practical detail. Second, an overview of the draft guidance for discerning in local contexts on the use of the PLF and/or seeking Delegated Episcopal Ministry. Third, an outline of the parallel work being undertaken on clergy in same sex marriage and how this relates to the overall proposal.

We will be providing suggestions for conducting discussion and specific questions that can be used to gather feedback – with the option of an online or paper-based collection for the feedback. We are happy to help support the collation of feedback both for individual dioceses as well as for the overall picture. As these proposals are for a period of discernment, this will also cover what is being sought in this period and how this would be evaluated.

Other resources are of course available on the [LLF section](#) of the national church website e.g. the [Pastoral Principles](#) which will be an essential part of preparations for these conversations. Beyond this, it is up to each diocese to decide how best to prepare for, conduct and gather feedback. The national team will be ready to support in any way they can.

The LLF Programme Board will receive updates on the feedback gathered. In addition to diocesan synods, input from a wide range of formal and informal groups is also being

sought. The LLF team hope to provide a list of those who have contributed alongside further iterations of the proposal.

Annex A – Synod Motions

Living in Love and Faith General Synod Motion February 2023 (as amended)

That this Synod, recognising the commitment to learning and deep listening to God and to each other of the Living in Love and Faith process, and desiring with God’s help to journey together while acknowledging the different deeply held convictions within the Church:

- a) lament and repent of the failure of the Church to be welcoming to LGBTQI+ people and the harm that LGBTQI+ people have experienced and continue to experience in the life of the Church;
- b) recommit to our shared witness to God’s love for and acceptance of every person by continuing to embed the Pastoral Principles in our life together locally and nationally;
- c) commend the continued learning together enabled by the Living in Love and Faith process and resources in relation to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage;
- d) welcome the decision of the House of Bishops to replace Issues in Human Sexuality with new pastoral guidance;
- e) welcome the response from the College of Bishops and look forward to the House of Bishops further refining, commending and issuing the Prayers of Love and Faith described in GS 2289 and its Annexes;
- f) invite the House of Bishops to monitor the Church’s use of and response to the Prayers of Love and Faith, once they have been commended and published, and to report back to Synod in five years’ time.’
- g) endorse the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage, and their intention that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England.

Living in Love and Faith General Synod Motion November 2023 (as amended)

That this Synod,

conscious that the Church is not of one mind on the issues raised by Living in Love and Faith, that we are in a period of uncertainty, and that many in the Church on all sides are being deeply hurt at this time, recognise the progress made by the House of Bishops towards implementing the motion on Living in Love and Faith passed by this Synod in February 2023, as reported in GS 2328, encourage the House to continue its work of implementation, and ask the House to consider whether some standalone services for same-sex couples could be made available for use, possibly on a trial basis, on the timescale envisaged by the motion passed by the Synod in February 2023

Living in Love and Faith General Synod Motion July 2024 (as amended)

That this Synod:

(a) support the overall proposal and timetable set out in GS 2358;

(b) request that the House of Bishops, with the advice of the LLF working groups:

i. revise the Pastoral Guidance to remove restrictions on the use of PLF in 'standalone' services alongside the introduction of an arrangement to register for Pastoral Reassurance;

ii. establish the basis for the provision of Pastoral Reassurance through a House of Bishops' Statement and Code of Practice which provides for the delegation of some specific and defined episcopal ministry, and which is overseen by an Independent Review Panel;

iii. report to this Synod at its February 2025 group of sessions on the further theological work carried out under the auspices of the Faith and Order Commission around the nature of doctrine, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of marriage and the question of clergy in same-sex civil marriages; this work to be appropriately budgeted and resourced by the Archbishops' Council in terms of theological advice, travel and meeting costs in order to increase the likelihood of meeting the timescales as set out in GS 2358.

(c) Agree that taken together the Pastoral Guidance, the Bishop's Statement and Code of Practice for pastoral provision will replace Issues in Human Sexuality.

(d) Agree for the arrangements for Pastoral Reassurance to be regularly monitored over a period of at least three years before being formally reviewed by General Synod.

Code of Practice for Living in Love and Faith

Part 1: Introduction

- 1.1 This Code has been written to enable confident, consistent, and transparent decision-making by all parties as a means of providing Pastoral Reassurance around the introduction and use of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) and wider discernment in ongoing work on Living in Love and Faith (LLF).
- 1.2 This Code outlines commitments and practices for a system of Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM) to enable specific areas of episcopal ministry to be formally delegated from a diocesan bishop to an episcopal colleague. Such arrangements are available to support churches and ministers where clear theological differences on the use of the PLF are present.
- 1.3 This Code is written seeking God’s grace and guidance and must be underpinned by generous relationships, including attention to power at all levels, recognising that the Church of England is bound by relationships of love as well as law.
- 1.4 This Code applies across the Church of England and must be read alongside the Bishops’ Statement (2025) on LLF.¹
- 1.5 This Code is supported by additional guidance for discerning and opting in to use of the PLF and/or requesting Pastoral Reassurance. There is also separate guidance for Vocations and Ministry processes.² The Code, and accompanying Guidance, draws on the application of the [Pastoral Principles](#) as markers of a healthy church culture.
- 1.6 This Code is not law. However, an Independent Review Panel (IRP)³ has been established to review and respond, as it considers appropriate, to concerns (which may be specific or general in nature) raised by or about individuals or Church of England bodies where a relevant office holder or body may have acted inconsistently with the Code.
- 1.7 The IRP will produce a written report on each review it has carried out. This report will include the Panel’s decision and any recommendations made to address the concern. The House of Bishops agrees to being bound by the decisions of the IRP in the application of the provision made by this Code.

¹ At this point in time, the Bishops’ Statement is still in development and has not yet been published.

² At his point in time, the Vocations & Ministry guidance is still in development and has not yet been published.

³ At this point in time, the Independent Review Panel is not yet established.

1.8 The House of Bishops has agreed this Code—which represents their collective commitment and expectations for wider practice. The intention over time is to provide legal backing to the arrangements this Code contains through putting the IRP on a legislative footing.

1.9 This Code applies with effect from [Date] until it is withdrawn.

1.10 This Code may be reviewed or revised by the House of Bishops subject to approval by the General Synod.

Part 2: Arrangements for Delegated Episcopal Ministry.

2.a Episcopal arrangements

2.1 All those in episcopal ministry within a region shall form and act as a Regional College of Bishops⁴ through which Dioceses can work in partnership to provide Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM). This provision is formal and will be supported by the appropriate legal instruments.

2.2 If there are no Bishops within a given region who are likely to be able to offer DEM, a Diocesan Bishop in the region will arrange for a current serving Bishop from outside that region to do so. Alternatively, one or more diocesan bishops will appoint an honorary assistant Bishop to offer DEM who would also be invited to participate in the Regional College.

2.3 In most places, the anticipation is that the principle of opting in to the use of the PLF will be sufficient reassurance. In addition, DEM should be available to provide Pastoral Reassurance to those holding differing integrities on the introduction and use of the PLF and other associated aspects of ongoing work of LLF. Thus, a church that does not wish the PLF to be used could request episcopal ministry from a Bishop who does not use them if their own Diocesan Bishop has committed to using the prayers—and vice versa.

2.4 Each Regional College shall agree arrangements so that there are Bishops able to offer DEM to those who may seek it. These arrangements should take account of the context of the Dioceses within each Region, draw on differing perspectives in their development, and will be outlined in a published Regional Plan. This includes DEM for parishes (and other non-parish manifestations of church) and episcopal care of ministers (see section 2b below).

⁴ A Regional College is based on the existing partnership working of bishops in regional groupings. It is recognised that dioceses are the legal entity within which DEM would need to operate, but that this is facilitated by arrangements within the region that they are a part of. Some larger dioceses may have the resources or need for a diocesan plan.

2.5 Diocesan Bishops in receipt of DEM requests from PCCs (Parochial Church Council) or other equivalent governance bodies⁵ under section 2b shall make their decisions not on a discretionary basis but in line with the published Regional Plan and shall respond to requests within four to six weeks.

2.6 In producing such a plan each Regional College of Bishops is encouraged to consult with stakeholders in the region to ensure that any Bishop appointed to offer DEM is likely to command support for the exercise of this ministry.

2.7 The Regional College of Bishops may alter the plan where there are changes of Bishop, or where the Diocese is in vacancy. New Bishops in a region are expected to adhere to this plan.

2.8 A Regional Plan may require updating and amending from time to time. Where changes are minor factual changes, the Regional College of Bishops will confirm and publish an updated plan. More substantial changes should follow a wider consultation and approval process (see 2.4).

2.9 Once arrangements for DEM are in place, the Regional College may not withdraw or amend those (save with the consent of the PCC) unless:

- The Bishop providing DEM is translated to a different region, leaves episcopal ministry, relinquishes their duties for other reasons such as ill health, is formally suspended or otherwise prevented from the exercise of their ministry;
- The Bishop providing DEM changes their position on the use of the PLF and/or their provision of DEM;
- There is a pastoral reorganisation that renders the arrangements for DEM unnecessary or unrequired [see also parochial arrangements in 2b below].

2.10 Cathedrals cannot request DEM. Diocesan Bishops may delegate functions within a cathedral service to another Bishop in their Regional College. Individual clergy who are members of the Cathedral Chapter may still request Episcopal Care under 2.24 below.

2.11 DEM does not affect the rights and responsibilities of Archdeacons. Archdeacons are however able to seek the assurances for individual ministry covered in this Code of Practice.

2b Parochial Arrangements

2.12 A PCC may request that the Diocesan Bishop delegates episcopal ministry to another Bishop in line with the Regional Plan. This principle applies *mutatis*

⁵ Throughout this Code, where it says PCC, read 'PCC (or other equivalent governance body)'

*mutandis*⁶ to non-parish manifestations of church, noting certain additional arrangements below.

- 2.13 A request for DEM should be regarded as a positive choice to opt in to additional Pastoral Reassurance. A choice to request DEM can also be made to support opting into use of the PLF in a context where this is required.
- 2.14 Prior to making a request a PCC should first engage in dialogue with their Bishops to understand different perspectives, ministerial needs, and concerns. Support for these conversations would be provided through Area Deans and Archdeacons.
- 2.15 Bishops may also wish to use additional ‘LLF chaplains’ or ‘Bishop’s Visitors’ as a team of suitably skilled facilitators holding different perspectives on LLF. In addition to supporting parishes and ministers, chaplains/visitors would provide a parallel report to assure that a PCC has considered these matters from a theological, pastoral, and legal perspective.
- 2.16 A request for DEM should be based on the Bishop’s actions taken or statements made, not on what a Bishop is alleged to think. Where a PCC wishes to proceed to DEM, they should write to the Diocesan Bishop requesting DEM and include a written account of the grounds on which it requests such provision (additional guidance is available for this process).
- 2.17 A PCC who receives DEM will be asked to contribute to gathering learning on their experiences of this provision.
- 2.18 A request for DEM can be made following a decision by a PCC by simple majority. It shall only make such a decision once it has conducted a consultation with the worshipping community and (where appropriate) considering the relationships with Church of England schools in the parish.
- 2.19 A PCCs’ decision should be made public alongside the Bishop’s agreement to the request.
- 2.20 Due regard for any guidance on best practice in consultation and decision making must be taken into consideration by all parties.
- 2.21 A review date should be set following a decision to request/not request DEM. However, a PCC may choose to review their arrangements at any point. The procedures for doing so will be the same as an original request as set out above.

⁶ ‘All necessary changes having been made, with the necessary changes’. This phrase occurs in legal writing to indicate that if some things are changed, necessarily other things must change as well.

- 2.22 A PCC is not required to review their position on DEM when entering a period of vacancy, they may choose to review their arrangements at this time. The procedures for doing so will be the same as an original request as set out above.
- 2.23 PCCs must be transparent in any parish profile about decisions on DEM taken by the PCC to date and the history of discussions on LLF. A PCC may choose to make specific statements about a position on the PLF being sought in a future incumbent.
- 2.24 An incumbent status licensed minister and/or priest in charge can request episcopal care from a regional Bishop. This care could extend to support in the provision of worship and teaching at the incumbent's church. It could also include involvement in Ministerial Reviews and references. Expectations on such episcopal care should be provided in the Regional Plan or a separate diocesan statement. This can be sought whether a PCC has requested DEM or not.
- 2.25 A Regional Plan should state arrangements to offer pastoral support to lay PCC members or parish officers if such support is requested. The availability of this support and how to access it should be communicated to all PCC members and parish officers.
- 2.26 A Regional Plan should also make such provision for any licensed minister. Additional guidance is also available for the provision of pastoral support in local contexts, including team ministries.
- 2.27 A Bishops Mission Initiative (BMO) can request DEM. This would require a joint decision of the leader and – where one exists – the governing body of the organisation which carries out the mission initiative (e.g. the trustees of the relevant Charitable Incorporated Organisation). DEM in this instance should also include consideration of the most appropriate Bishop's visitor for this context.
- 2.28 PCCs of individual parishes within a multi-parish benefice can request DEM. A District Church Council (DCC) can do so for their district if the ability to do so is delegated to the DCC in the relevant scheme. A principle of decision making at the smallest unit of formal responsibility would apply in such circumstances – either a PCC or DCC. Given the dynamics within a multi-parish benefice – particularly where a Team ministry is established – or where a group ministry exists, extra care should be taken in the consultation process and additional local pastoral arrangements may be preferable. Additional guidance is available for such circumstances.
- 2.29 Chaplaincies based in other institutions cannot seek DEM. Licensed ministers serving in chaplaincies can seek episcopal care from a regional Bishop. Noting however, that chaplains (employed or voluntary) would also be subject to conducting their duties in line with any contractual obligations agreed with the institution concerned.

2.30 Church of England churches within ecumenical partnerships can request DEM and can opt in to use the PLF. The process for discernment should include ecumenical partners and where possible seek formal acknowledgement.

2c Supporting Arrangements

2.31 All Bishops in each region commit to sustaining a Regional College of Bishops that reflects the diversity of traditions and provides opportunity to all traditions, recognising that individual Bishops' views may develop over time and that there is no requirement to adopt any specific position given the opt-in nature of use of the PLF.

2.32 DEM is intended to provide additional Pastoral Reassurance within a collegiate approach of shared episcopal ministry to enable those of differing theological convictions to continue to work, minister and worship together in the body of Christ. As such, it would be expected that parishes who have been provided with DEM would continue to engage with and be supported by their Deaneries, Chapters and wider Diocesan bodies.

2.33 The requirements of this Code may be used in evidence to support an application to the Dioceses Commission for the filling of a suffragan See. However, the Dioceses Commission has full determination of such a decision.

Part 3: Consequential Arrangements

Part 3a: People

3.1 Bishops will endorse requests from ordinands for a Bishop with DEM to be a sponsoring Bishop for ordinands and for that Bishop to ordain those ordinands (including where this may involve a regional Bishop outside the Diocese).

3.2 Candidates for ordained ministry will be supported through the usual vocations processes in their Dioceses and selection will be equitable under national guidance.

3.3 Candidates for licensed lay ministry will be supported through the usual vocations processes in their Dioceses and selection will be equitable under the guidance set in their Diocese.

3.4 All licenses will be issued in the name of the diocesan Bishop, but services of licensing may be conducted by a Bishop with DEM. The same applies to the licensing of lay ministers.

- 3.5 Where DEM is in active use, the Bishop with DEM will be involved in any appointment process for clerical roles either alongside the diocesan Bishop or as their representative.
- 3.6 Arrangements for managing cases under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (in future the Clergy Conduct Measure) are unchanged. The default is that diocesan Bishops exercise the bishop's functions under the Measure except in specific Dioceses where alternative delegated arrangements have been instituted. A Bishop exercising DEM cannot exercise functions under the Clergy Discipline Measure unless this is specifically agreed as part of formal delegation arrangements. The provisions of Canon E6.3 in respect of Licenced Lay Ministers and Canon E8.5 in respect of Lay Workers also remain unchanged.
- 3.7 .All Bishops in the Regional College commit to the flourishing of all clergy of all traditions. Bishops will support their Diocesan Director for Ordinations to bring forward candidates for ordination from all traditions within the Church of England. Consideration in the allocation of training incumbents, appointments (including diocesan and senior roles), access to development programmes, and pastoral and financial support structures will similarly reflect this commitment.
- 3.8 Bishops, in so far as it is within their capacity, will support Theological Education Institutions to develop candidates across the range of traditions within the Church of England.
- 3.9 Theological Education Institutions will accept ordinands in line with published admissions criteria. Institutions may choose to hold to a particular integrity on the use or non-use of the PLF. Additional guidance on the conduct of ordinands and the facilitating teaching around matters relating to LLF is also available.
- 3.10 Bishops and their offices will also seek, in so far as it is practically possible, to offer training course for Licensed Lay ministry roles that will seek to develop candidates across the range of traditions within the Church of England.

Part 3b: Resources

- 3.11 The mutual commitment of Dioceses and parishes in the cure of souls should continue to be recognised through the existing financial arrangements. These arrangements should be seen as mutually enabling the ministry of a Christian presence in every community.
- 3.12 Contributions to diocesan costs through external financial giving schemes and restricted funds (whether direct or indirect) shall be regarded as legitimate giving towards common fund requests.

- 3.13 In the allocation and distribution of both diocesan resources and resources allocated to Dioceses under national programmes (for example by the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board) the principles of non-discrimination apply. Bishops will not discriminate between traditions in their allocation of resources. Distribution in line with a published investment programme or strategic plan shall not be regarded as discrimination.
- 3.14 Bishops can, subject to any applicable legal requirements, choose not to allocate ministry resources to parishes (or other forms of ministry) that have formally stated an unwillingness (where they are financially able) to contribute to the costs of their allocated clergy and Diocesan services to support mission and ministry.
- 3.15 Bishops with DEM may not receive financial contributions from the parishes they serve.
- 3.16 Arrangements for the ownership and management of buildings, and the application of the faculty jurisdiction are unaffected by any DEM provisions.
- 3.17 DEM has no bearing on the provision for Ecumenical partners to use shared places of worship in liturgical practices approved by their denominations. A separate policy for the registering of such places for marriages of same sex couples according to the rites of other denominations is also in force.

Part 3c: Safeguarding

- 3.18 Bishops, Dioceses, parishes, and cathedrals will continue to work together for high standards in safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in their care.
- 3.19 Any arrangements for DEM do not change responsibilities and accountabilities for good safeguarding, with the exception that the responsibility for directing a risk assessment under Canon C 30 may be delegated to the Bishop with DEM, who would then be required to comply with all requirements set out in the relevant legislation and Safeguarding Codes of Practice.
- 3.20 Participation in diocesan training to foster a whole church culture that promotes safeguarding and regular contact between parish and diocesan safeguarding officers should continue irrespective of positions taken on the PLF and DEM, and in line with the requirements of the Learning and Development Framework.

Part 3d: Other responsibilities and duties

- 3.21 The existence or not of DEM has no impact on the structure of deanery synods or deanery chapters. Churches and/or clergy may wish to participate on a voluntary basis in other informal arrangements for mutual fellowship and support between churches of similar traditions, whether in the form of a “society” or otherwise.
- 3.22 All churches, whether opting for DEM or not, should continue with the normal procedures of good governance and good administration, including engaging with diocesan staff, responding to requests for information, and providing statistical returns.
- 3.23 Churches should seek a meaningful and reciprocal relationship with schools in their parish or area. Within a school’s locality there may be churches and clergy holding a breadth of views on many issues. School and church leaders should recognise the existence of these different positions and all relationships between parish churches and clergy and their schools should be built on mutual trust and understanding.
- 3.24 Clergy and lay workers exercising their ministry within a school context should discuss and agree to undertake such activities in a manner that respects the legal and pastoral responsibilities which schools exercise towards their pupils, staff and other stakeholders.
- 3.25 Churches and schools are encouraged to note that all traditions within the Church of England are integral expressions of the Church of England. Church schools should continue to engage with clergy and laity from their local churches whatever their formal position on the PLF and whether they have, or have not, sought DEM.

Part 4: implementation

- 4.1 Complaints to the IRP can be made by individuals and institutions if they believe that a church authority (as set out in the IRP Terms of Reference) is in breach of this Code, subject to the rules and guidance which the IRP will set out.
- 4.2 All in the Church of England should cooperate with the IRP in its work. In due course it is anticipated that legal enforcement to cooperate with the IRP will be sought.
- 4.3 For now, any recommendations of the IRP should be considered as morally binding on Bishops, clergy, and church bodies, all of whom are enjoined to abide by them. Bishops commit themselves to abide by and/or implement any recommendations of the IRP where it is legally and practically possible for them to do so.

4.4 In line with the Terms of Reference for the IRP any cases of dispute should first seek to be resolved through local processes. These may include informal mediation or formal complaints processes.

4.5 Bishops will seek to use the procedures contained in this Code to resolve disputes about matters to which it applies. If they cannot be resolved through local processes they will seek resolution through the IRP.

4.6 Bishops commit to provide any usual communications and media support from the Diocese in the event of any adverse publicity following a decision to opt in to use the PLF and/or seek DEM.

ENDS

DRAFT

Glossary

Bishops Mission Initiative (BMO)

Code of Practice (CoP)

Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM)

Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO)

District Church Council (DCC)

Independent Review Panel (IRP)

Licensed Lay Minister (LLM)

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Pastoral Reassurance (PR)

Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF)

Regional College of Bishops (Regional College)

Vocations and Ministry (V&M)

Living in Love and Faith Draft Pastoral Guidance

Version 5 – REVISED DRAFT JANUARY 2025

This version has been updated through consultation with the PLF working group to reflect the use of PLF in public worship in bespoke services (i.e. held at points other than regular scheduled services). It has also been combined with sections that address decision making processes around the choice to opt-in to Pastoral Reassurance. This version remains in draft form and continues to be developed through ongoing feedback.

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1 Introduction: The Prayers of Love and Faith and Pastoral Reassurance

Pastoral Guidance Cover Note

This Pastoral Guidance accompanies the use and implementation of the Prayers of Love and Faith (hereafter referred to as PLF) and consideration of whether a church or minister may wish to seek further pastoral reassurance to support their positions of conscience over the introduction of the PLF. It is meant to emphasize good practice, as well as answer questions that clergy, lay leaders and congregations may have as they seek to make decisions around the use of the PLF.

Pastoral Reassurance are additional measures that aim to uphold the principle of conscience around opting in to use the PLF, provide for the pastoral needs of ministers themselves as they navigate the introduction of the PLF, and offer reassurance that, despite differences on the PLF, there is a valued place for those of all theological convictions within the Church of England.

The guidance was composed collaboratively, with a diverse working group, and has been developed from guidance first published in 2023. The areas considered emphasize that care and careful consideration on these matters is needed given that there may be very strongly held views in many places about the introduction of the PLF and/or concern to seek further pastoral reassurance.

Separate guidance for vocations and ministry will be developed in due course.

Guiding principles

The Pastoral Guidance has been arranged in a question-and-answer format in order to be user-friendly and accessible. It is intended to be a living document that can be easily added to as further questions emerge. The format, however, means that this guidance does not offer a consistent theological and pastoral argument. The underlying theological work for the use and implementation of the PLF can be found in the Theological Rationale published for the November 2023 Synod ([Annex H of GS 2328](#)). The Q&A format leads to some repetition, but allows people to search for the answers they are looking for without having to refer back to previous answers.

Commended prayers and bespoke services

1.1. The Prayers of Love and Faith

The Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) are a resource for God’s pilgrim people as they journey on the way of Christ toward the fulness of his Kingdom. They are another means by which to give thanks for God’s gifts in creation and redemption, to turn from sin, and to seek God’s aid in becoming holy, in proclaiming the gospel, in loving our neighbours and pursuing justice.

The Church of England teaches that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, blessed by God in creation and pointing to the love between Christ and the Church; a way of life which Christ makes holy. It is within marriage that sexual intimacy finds its proper place.

However, marriage is not open to all, and even for those who enter it, there is often a road of growth and development. Many wish to celebrate God’s gifts and grace in other forms of committed, faithful relationships that are not marriage but nevertheless contains qualities and goods that are worth affirming and celebrating. Many would also like to pray for God’s guidance and blessing as they seek to grow in love and faith.

The PLF make provision for stable, faithful relationships between same-sex couples and for giving thanks for their faithfulness and their fruitfulness in service to God and neighbour. In that sense, they recognize the couple’s commitments to one another. They ask for God’s grace in the holy ordering of companionship and godly love as they follow Christ and seek to grow in holiness. They ask for God’s blessing for them and their families as they offer self-giving love to one another, and in their witness and service to their neighbours.

The PLF are specifically written for same-sex couples, because no provision is currently made for them through public forms of prayer. The PLF are not a form of marriage service. They can be used with couples, whether they are married or not. Nevertheless, the PLF recognize all that is good, and holy, and faithful in these relationships and enable the people in these relationships to place themselves before God and ask for God’s blessing for their journey of love and faith.

1.1.1 What are the PLF resources?

The PLF are [a suite of liturgical resources](#) which can be used in private prayer and public worship. In December 2023, the House of Bishops commended the PLF Resource Section for use in the regular services of a church or other worshipping community. Having welcomed a period of discernment about their use, the House of Bishops has extended this commendation to the use of the PLF in so-called

'bespoke' or 'standalone' services; that is, services which would not have taken place had the PLF not been included.

1.1.2 What is the legal and liturgical basis of these resources?

The PLF are commended for use in the minister's discretion either where an authorised form of service provides for the use of prayers at the minister's discretion, or under [Canon B5](#). Such forms of service are used under the authority of the minister; and are not required to be authorised by Bishop. A minister taking the service can use discretion in including/modifying material in an existing form of service - e.g. special prayers at evensong, but it is for the minister with cure of souls to use or permit the use of 'forms of service' for use on occasions for which there is no authorized material, i.e. bespoke services. A list of some commended resources under Canon B5 can be found on the [website of the Church of England](#).

1.1.3 Do incumbents and parishes have to use these prayers?

The use of the PLF is optional. No one is or can be required to use these materials, it is a matter of personal conscience. Everyone is permitted to use the PLF within pastoral conversation and private prayer outside the context of public worship. Use within any form of public worship is subject to discussion and decision in each parish by the incumbent in agreement with the PCC.

1.1.4 How do incumbents and parishes come to a decision on whether to use the PLF?

Any use of the commended prayers from the resource sections of the PLF in Public Worship is down to the minister with the cure of souls. However, it would be wise for this decision to be discussed with the PCC, and in consultation with the wider congregation.

It is likely to be pastorally beneficial for a minister to discuss an intention to use the PLF in private prayer or at least to make this known to a PCC. Though this is not required.

Resources to enable good conversations are available, see the list under 2.1.2. If an incumbent and PCC cannot come to an agreement on the use of the PLF, guidance is available under 2.4 on how to navigate this.

1.2 Pastoral Reassurance?

1.2.1 What is Pastoral Reassurance?

The use of the PLF is entirely optional and choosing to use these a matter of conscience for individual ministers in dialogue with their congregations (see 1.1.4). Pastoral Reassurance are additional measures that aim to uphold this principle of

conscience, provide for the pastoral needs of ministers themselves as they navigate the introduction of the PLF, and offer reassurance that, despite differences on the PLF, there is a valued place for those of all theological convictions within the Church of England.

1.2.2 Why is further Pastoral Reassurance needed?

Elements of pastoral reassurance are potentially relevant for different groups within the Church: those who wish to use the PLF, those who do not or who might be opposed to their use, and those who are unsure. If an incumbent and Bishop do not agree on the use of PLF, this could negatively impact their relationship, and consequently, the cure of souls in a particular parish(es). For this reason, Pastoral Reassurance through a request for Delegated Episcopal Ministry can be sought. In this way, a church that does not wish to use the PLF could request episcopal ministry from a Bishop who does not use them if their own Diocesan Bishop has committed to using the prayers—and vice versa. For some, the principle of opting into the use of the PLF may prove to be sufficient reassurance.

1.2.3 What is Delegated Episcopal Ministry?

A Diocesan Bishop is the chief pastor having ordinary jurisdiction within the Diocese (Canon C18.1 and 2). Legal provision exists that enables episcopal functions to be delegated from a Bishop as the 'ordinary' to a suffragan or assistant Bishop, or to another Diocesan Bishop. The model for DEM in reassurance for LLF is based on a regional model whereby a Regional College of Bishops agrees how the functions of a Diocesan's responsibilities to their clergy and lay leaders is to be delegated to other Bishops in line with a national code of practice. As part of this arrangement each Diocesan Bishop will be expected to outline their theological position and plan for shared (delegated) episcopal ministry.

1.2.4 Why Is DEM being provided through a Regional Plan?

The Bishops are committed to shared episcopate as a means of leading the Church effectively, operating as a College, across the different Dioceses. Some larger Dioceses may have sufficient variance among their College to offer effective and appropriate care for all perspectives on the use of PLF. However there will also be a need to work with varying models of shared episcopate elsewhere. It is anticipated that regional models will be necessary in order that some functions of a Diocesan's responsibilities to their clergy and lay leaders may be delegated to other Bishops within the region. Each Diocesan Bishop will be expected to outline their theological position and plan for shared (delegated) episcopal ministry.

1.2.5 How do parishes decide if DEM is something they wish to request?

A request for DEM can be made following a decision by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) by simple majority. The PCC can only make this decision once it has conducted a consultation with the worshipping community and (where appropriate) considering the relationships with Church of England schools in the parish. A PCC may request that the Diocesan Bishop delegates episcopal ministry to another Bishop in line with the Regional Plan. Parish should first speak to their Bishops to understand different perspectives, ministerial needs, and concerns. Support for these conversations would be provided through Area Deans and Archdeacons. Where a parish wishes to proceed to DEM, they should write to the Diocesan Bishop requesting DEM and include the reasons for their request.

The Code of Practice outlines that such requests would be granted and not considered on a case-by-case basis. This will require the PCC (or equivalent governance body) to write to their Bishop to make such a request. This should include a rationale for the specific actions that have prompted the request and an outline of the ministries in DEM that are being sought.

1.2.6 What happens in cases where an incumbent may have a different view on seeking further pastoral reassurance to their PCC (and visa versa)?

Where a PCC and incumbent are not in agreement on seeking DEM, a minister can request episcopal care from a regional Bishop. In addition, a regional plan should also outline how lay people in governance roles can access additional pastoral and practical support.

1.3 Ongoing Discernment around Living in Love and Faith

1.3.1 What is this period of discernment for?

The period of discernment is a period of three years to examine the extent of the usage of the PLF in all its forms, including in bespoke services. This period will also consider the need for and use of pastoral reassurance and the specific requirements of DEM. By formalizing such use within a period of discernment this continues the approach taken in LLF to include a period of learning for the Church in regard to how we live together in difference.

1.3.2 How will information and insights be gathered?

The Liturgical Commission [or a potential Standing Commission] is considering the areas of enquiry that will be of value in relation to the commended suite of prayers. Data will be gathered by Dioceses as to the use of PLF and DEM through Archdeacons' Articles of Enquiry. Ongoing Diocesan debate will be guided by the LLF process that will help to determine the shape of the wider discernment going forward.

1.3.3 How will this be reported and evaluated?

[Yet to be fully determined] The Liturgical Commission [or a potential Standing Commission] will oversee the evaluation of the PLF and any recommendations as to their further use in the future.

1.3.4 What is the longer-term process that this will contribute to?

As already referenced earlier the use of PLF is part of a much longer journey of engaging with Living in Love and Faith. The three-year discernment period will determine any possible future requirements regarding the use of the PLF. This could include a move from commended material under B5 to that of legalising them under Canon B2. Alongside this FAOC will continue its work in relation to doctrine and the LLF process will engage in other aspects of how we relate to God and one another as already indicated.

2 Church life in local contexts: Seeking discernment and navigating disagreement

This section of the Guidance will address how a church may decide to start using the PLF, including as bespoke service, how they may relate to couples enquiring about PLF and how services may be offered, planned and enacted.

2.1 Making transparent decisions locally

2.1.1 How can a local church come to a common mind about the PLF?

PLF can be used privately; publicly, in the course of intercessions within a regular service; and as part of a bespoke service. While any use of the prayers from the resource section of the PLF is down to the incumbent, it would be wise for this decision to be discussed with the PCC, in consultation with the wider congregation, and made known ahead of time.

It is important to acknowledge the honest limits of a church's 'common mind': in almost every church there will be a range of views on any matter. Coming to a common mind, therefore, may be a matter of coming to a considered mind among the leadership: that is, agreement at the level of minister and PCC

In very many cases, coming to a considered mind will be a reasonably straightforward outworking of deep bonds of trust and shared work between lay and ordained leaders. Finding consensus will likely entail compromise and generosity, grounded in a desire to focus on the church's mission and call.

The LLF course, the Pastoral Principles course, and the wider LLF resources and advocates can help local leaders to hold conversations in gracious and undefended ways, so that when decisions are taken, they rest on a transparent process that attends to different voices.

The decision to offer the PLF in public worship will need to be carefully discerned in a local context. Although an incumbent or priest-in-charge has oversight of worship, the culture and church tradition of their local community needs to be taken into account. Given the strength of feeling around this question, it is wise to come to an agreed, negotiated decision after a process of sensitive consultation, informed by the [Pastoral Principles](#) for any use of the PLF as part of public worship.

If a church wants to offer a bespoke service, it is good practice for the PCC and incumbent to come to a joint decision, and for this decision to be reflected in meeting minutes. This could take the form of a PCC resolution, but is not a requirement. However, as the use of the PLF is commended under Canon B 5 it is the minister with the cure of souls (usually the incumbent) who has the final decision on opting in to use these. In a context where a PCC wishes to use the PLF but a minister does not, a PCC cannot override this decision. However, local accommodations may be made with an incumbent's agreement. The guidance discusses examples of this.

In cases of conflict of intractable difference between PCC and incumbent, the area/rural dean, archdeacon and/or Bishop should be asked for advice and mediation. Dioceses might also offer the support of a Bishops' Visitor or LLF Chaplain. If no agreement can be reached, PLF bespoke services cannot be used in that setting, though this does not preclude future exploration of underlying questions, feelings and reasons for the disagreement with a view to revisit the decision at a later stage. No minister can be made to use a form of service against their conscience even if a PCC would like them to; conversely, an incumbent cannot overrule the decision of a PCC if they have decided not to use the PLF.

When a church opts in to offer this type of service, they should refer to a PCC decision on the matter, and briefly explain how they have consulted with the wider congregation. An incumbent must notify the Bishop and the area/rural dean of a decision to opt in. Further guidance on registration is available in section 4

2.1.2 Is there any help/are there any resources in enabling good conversation in churches and PCCs?

Specific resources are available on the LLF hub with the LLF course and wider resources, and of course the Pastoral Principles as a starting point to have good conversations within a respectful, open environment that promotes learning together in contexts of disagreement. Diocesan LLF advocates may wish to continue their role and offer support in this way.

A document called [Braver and Safer](#) offers guidance on conducting conversations about LLF, especially in situations where shared learning is being sought between participants.

An additional great wealth of resources, in the Church of England, in the wider church and in non-profit organisations exist to help facilitate good conversations on difficult topics. Some of these are more generic and not specific to conversations around sexuality, like training for leaders by

Bridgebuilders or various coaching organisations, or [The Difference Course | The Archbishop of Canterbury](#). CPAS has resources for PCCs; and Dioceses have members of staff, particularly archdeacons, who have wisdom and experience in helping churches in times of conflict.

In addition, it would be highly desirable for every Diocese or group of Dioceses to consider having trained facilitators who can come alongside churches, either at the point of first conversation, or when/if these conversations become conflictual.

2.1.3 What does a church need to say on their website and information about their stance on sexuality?

[This section is still under consideration]

There is no formal or legal requirement for local churches to make their theological views known. Detailed statements on websites may not be the best way to convey information about deeply sensitive, pastoral matters, but this needs to be balanced by concerns for transparency, and care for those looking for a church that will welcome them.

Given that websites can be a first point of contact for enquirers, transparency is strongly recommended, with a statement about whether the church offers the PLF, and to what extent. If a church does not offer the PLF, it may be pastorally appropriate to give details of how couples can contact someone to help them find a church that does (the deanery or Diocesan point of contact).

The provision of an opt-in system for bespoke services, means that churches who wish to offer the full suite of prayers can be identified as doing so easily for those looking for such provision. Churches that wish to offer the PLF as part of regular services alone may also advertise this by using a PLF tag on AChurchNearYou.com.

For churches that choose a more limited approach, they will need to decide how far they explain this in their public presence (such as social media), and how to respond pastorally to questions from those who ask. Transparency and honesty, with kindness and generosity, are strongly recommended. Specific wording should be thought through locally and reflect the particular concerns of the parish, and make every effort to be positive without being misleading.

Churches may choose not to offer the PLF for a range of reason. Where churches are challenged by local groups or people for not opting in, appropriate support should be offered by archdeacons and Diocesan communications officers.

2.1.4 How can a church model honesty, clarity and respect in teaching, whatever their theological outlook?

The teaching of the Church is based upon Scripture, reflected upon through the

lenses of the historical teaching of the Church, and reason. The Pastoral Principles concentrate on the type of underlying attitude that makes for respectful, honest and caring speech. The wider LLF material can help resource teaching in how we relate to God and one another.

Churches cannot assume that their congregations will be monolithic, with everyone agreeing with a stated position; any group of people will contain theological and experiential difference. And in any church, there will be members who have friends, family and loved ones who are deeply affected by these matters, and what is said must therefore hold these relationships gently and generously.

Good teaching helps others learn, and therefore needs to make space for discussion and for the respectful consideration of the best of all positions, without pretending that all positions are equal. In all things, avoiding practice that might lead to accusations of homophobia, hatred, caricature and *ad hominem* accusations are a hallmark of good teaching and preaching. Incumbents are responsible for the oversight of all other leaders, who may not have received the same level of training or been exposed to the same breadth of perspectives; it is therefore their responsibility to ensure a culture of respectful teaching and learning in local communities.

2.1.5 How should the matter of LLF and the PLF be raised in Parish Profiles and appointment processes?

Good discernment requires an open, honest and transparent approach to appointments. Parishes need to be clear about what they need in a new incumbent and clerical candidates will want to know what is expected of them. Archdeacons will be able to offer appropriate guidance and support. Parishes should be given similar opportunities for reflection and the possibility of reconsidering their current position on matters of the use of PLF as with other areas of conscience, such as declarations in regard to appointing female incumbents. It is recommended that parish profiles are encouraged to give clear and transparent information on the use of PLF as with their websites.

2.1.6 How can a church explore its practices and their impact on people, in particular in relation to homophobia?

There are ample resources available to help churches do this. The LLF course and the Pastoral Principles course would be helpful, along with robust self-examination on the part of the minister(s) and PCC, and reading the resources mentioned in the LLF book and the online library. There are LGBTQIA+ Christian organisations and professionals who hold expertise and wisdom in facilitating conversations with congregations, PCCs, and individuals that may be fruitful. These organisations span the full breadth of the theological spectrum, and every church should be able to find support and advice sensitive to their theological views.

An undefended listening exercise which asks for feedback may also be helpful, though this would be better done if facilitated by someone with experience and wisdom in this area.

A document called [Braver and Safer](#) is available to offer guidance on conducting conversations about LLF, especially in situations where shared learning is being sought between participants.

An additional forthcoming resource from the Church of England, [Teach Us to Pray](#), will help churches explore their practice in relation to pastoral prayer and prayer ministry, with a view to nurture healthy cultures with respect to prayer in pastoral setting, including (but not limited to) questions around sexuality.

Creating and nurturing a healthy culture within the Church is an essential part of sharing the good news of Christ. Familiarity with and implementation of [safeguarding guidelines around spiritual abuse](#).

2.2 Making decisions about use of the Prayers of Love and Faith in Public Worship

2.2.1 Is there a process for a church to decide to offer the PLF?

The PLF (comprising a Resource Section and Outline Orders for bespoke services) can be used in different ways for different purposes.

When prayer is offered informally in private pastoral situations, outside of acts of public worship, this is left to the discretion of the minister, as part of sensitive, discerning pastoral ministry.

The use of the PLF in public worship should be discerned by the incumbent and PCC together, and if both agree that they should be offered, the parish should be registered as having opted in to the PLF via the Bishop's office.

The ways in which the PLF are used in a particular ministerial context, especially in public worship, should be carefully discerned. In any congregation, there will be a variety of views and ~~lived~~ experience and the discernment should be handled with care and gentleness, supported by an offer of additional pastoral care.

2.2.2 Can the PLF be offered in a cathedral?

The PLF can be offered in cathedrals, subject to Canon B 5 and generally applicable canonical rules about forms of service.

Cathedrals have a particular place within the life of a Diocese, and need to function as places where all are welcome. This is particularly difficult with regard to the PLF, because either offering, or not offering them, may cause consternation with certain parts of the church. However, cathedrals are also well practised at being places of welcome for many, and strive to enable all groups in a Diocese to find a home there, and access the cathedral – in attending services, in using the premises and in relationships with the staff. The range of clergy in any one cathedral, including within its wider College of Canons, may include different opinions on the PLF, and this diversity can be an asset in relating to all in the Diocese. Cathedrals have a particular role in modelling gracious disagreement and welcome to all, and, in their practice, refuting any sense of taint by association with a space where the prayers are, or are not, offered.

The decision to use any form of commended prayers would be at the discretion of the Dean and residentiary canons, in accordance with their Cathedral statutes, subject to the same restrictions and guidance about use of the PLF in Public Worship.. The same good practice guidance about consultation and transparency would apply as with parishes.

It could also be considered good practice to engage the wider college of Canons in discerning use of the PLF. This might enable consideration of views from a wider range of priests and lay people within the diocese who also share a concern for the life of the Cathedral within the diocese.

Given the role of cathedrals as the seat of the Bishop, and in the life of the Diocese, Chapters should seek the views of their Diocesan Bishop before making a decision, rather than simply notifying the Bishop. This conversation is primarily about ensuring good ongoing relationships, recognising that the final decision lies with the dean and chapter.

2.2.3 Can the prayers be used in chaplaincy contexts?

Yes, the prayers can be used in these contexts. Where there is a chapel or worship space associated with the chaplaincy, the same principles as with local churches should be followed to come to an agreement to use the prayers in the place of worship where they will take place. A local church may be used in consultation with the incumbent. If bespoke services are used, this must be agreed with the PCC and incumbent (see 1.1.4).

2.2.4 Can some of the prayers be offered, but not all of them?

Yes. The PLF are a suite of resources, and different churches will feel able to offer different combinations of prayers for different circumstances.

Some churches may want to offer private prayers only, others none at all, others may wish to offer the full range, while yet others may wish to use forms of prayers as part of their regular services only. Some may wish to use only prayers that do not include blessings.

The PLF are meant to offer the flexibility needed for the wide range of local contexts of the Church of England.

2.2.5 How can a church explain their decision not to offer the prayers?

The provision of an opt-in system for use of the PLF in public worship held at any point means that churches that wish to offer the full suite of prayers can be identified as doing so easily for those looking for such provision. Churches that wish to offer the PLF as part of regular services may also advertise, including by using a PLF tag on AChurchNearYou.com.

For those using commended resources, churches that wish to offer the PLF as part of regular services may also advertise, including by using a PLF tag on AChurchNearYou.com.

For churches that choose a more limited approach, they will need to decide

how far they explain this in their public presence (such as social media), and how to respond pastorally to questions from those who ask. Transparency and honesty, with kindness and generosity, are strongly recommended. Specific wording should be thought through locally and reflect the particular concerns of the parish, and make every effort to be positive without being misleading.

Churches may choose not to offer the PLF for a range of reasons, and it is incumbent upon all other church leaders and Diocesan staff not to speculate, condemn or pressurize churches that are either not ready or not willing to offer the PLF. Where churches are challenged by local groups or people for not opting in, appropriate support should be offered by archdeacons and Diocesan communications officers.

2.2.6 Who can offer the prayers?

Informal prayer drawing on the PLF suite of resources, such as, for instance, the prayer of Richard of Chichester, may be used by anyone to pray for others in private contexts.

In the context of a service of public worship, the PLF should only be used 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.

2.2.7 Is the decision to use the prayers in public worship binding on all clergy in a team, including curates, associates, SSMs and retired clergy, and in all places?

The decision of whether to use the prayers requires the agreement of both the incumbent and the PCC for this specific church. However, no minister can be forced to use material from the PLF against their conscience, and no member of the team may use the PLF in worship in the parish against the decision of the incumbent and PCC. If a minister from a parish not using the PLF was invited to officiate at a service in a parish where they were in use, they would be at liberty to do so, though careful consideration of the ramifications for ministry in the home parish would be needed.

Where a parish has made a decision, it is expected that members of the ministry team would generously support it, whilst not having to go against their own conscience. Diversity within a team can be an asset in ministering to people with different convictions, and in modelling generous handling of difference. No member of the team may use the prayers in that parish if the PCC or incumbent had not agreed that they should be used.

2.2.8 Can decisions around the use of the prayers be reversed by a new incumbent? What happens if an incumbent changes their mind?

No minister can be required to use the prayers. When a new incumbent comes into post, this will have followed an appointment process. If the parish has strong views on whether the prayers should or should not be offered, and in what form, in the interest of transparency this should be agreed in advance of appointment and clearly flagged in the paperwork, so that there would be no surprises when a new incumbent takes up their post.

A decision could be revisited if an incumbent changes their mind, or if a new incumbent wishes to revisit the decision, or in response to a motion brought by a PCC member. Where this happens in a way that may create conflict and strong disagreement within the PCC, mediation and advice should be sought from suitably qualified persons – this may be the area/rural dean, archdeacon, or a locally appointed LLF advisor. Dioceses should nurture a small team of people able to come alongside parishes and ministers; mediators need suitable skills, capacity, and the willingness to remain impartial.

In addition, it would be advisable for PCCs and incumbents to build in a review period after their first conversation on this matter. This would allow for review of how this has been received, what has worked well, and how they may want to continue, as well as make it possible for those who disagree to express their thoughts.

If they decided not to offer the full suite of resources, it is also an opportunity for evaluation and seeking to learn from practice so far.

2.2.9 How can a church who are not choosing to use the prayers, either publicly or privately, still respond well to enquiries by couples asking for a service?

Churches should strive for a position of maximum transparency over their practice, so that couples who attend the church regularly would know what the stated position is, and those who are not regular attenders would be able to find out easily. It would be helpful to be clear about how far a church may go – would they offer private prayers at all, private prayers only, prayers as part of regular Sunday worship – as well as what they will not do (a bespoke service following a civil ceremony, or using prayers of blessing). However, no church is required to make their position known.

If an enquiry is made from outside the regular congregation, an appropriate pastoral response needs to be made, which explains the reasons for not offering the prayers or service that a couple is requesting, without trying to coerce a couple into the church's own perspective. The couple may be signposted to a church that offers the type of service they are looking for, or to the deanery or Diocesan point of contact who could do so. Every Diocese has a responsibility to ensure that a system is in place to facilitate this. Whether a list and point of contact are available at deanery, area or Diocesan level will be dependent on local context, sensitivities and capacity.

Contact with a couple should always be sensitive and generous, and avoid becoming judgmental or coercive. Local churches need to be aware that, whatever their reasons, and however well they try to explain them, the simple fact of saying 'no' can be taken as deep rejection and judgement. Entering into protracted conversations or arguments over this is not appropriate.

It would still be appropriate however to welcome a couple warmly if they attend on a Sunday and offer a conversation if they found it helpful.

If an enquiry is made from within the regular congregation, it is possible that messaging is unclear about what the church would or would not offer out of the suite of resources. It could also indicate a lack of transparency over doctrine and teaching, and reveal how much diversity there often is in most churches, even when the leadership assume that the majority or totality of a church agrees with them. It would be helpful for local leaders to reflect on how they can engage the wider congregation in thinking about questions of sexuality, and on how ministry can take into account the reality of diversity within the congregation in the most appropriate way.

An open, pastorally sensitive conversation should be had, where the couple's perspective can be expressed safely, whether they decide to stay within the church and abide by its teaching, stay within the church and live with difference but still seek the service they long for in another church, or decide to move to another church.

2.2.10 Can a church decide to only offer the PLF in private situations?

The canons regulate the forms of service that may be used in public prayer and the administration of the sacraments. Prayers in private, pastoral contexts are left to the discretion of the individual minister.

A church is completely at liberty not to offer any of the PLF within the context of public worship, but this would not bar ministers from praying with people in

other contexts.

2.2.11 What constitutes a private or a public service?

A service that takes place in a church will generally be understood as a 'public service' open to specific invitees as well as members of the public. A service that takes place in a home or other place to which the public at large are not admitted will be considered private. Particular circumstances might introduce exceptions to either situation.

2.2.12 What is the system for ensuring all couples can be signposted to a church that will offer the prayers for them?

Churches that wish to use the commended resources as part of regular services may indicate this on their website.

A list will be kept at Diocesan level, and, if appropriate, at deanery level. A point of contact should be available either at Diocesan or deanery level, and publicised clearly on the Diocesan website, so couples could be signposted to their nearest church able to offer these services.

Churches that have opted in may signal this by using a PLF tag on AChurchNearYou.com.

It is important to note however that there is no automatic right for such a service to be offered – even when a church has opted in, it is still left to the discretion of the minister whether to offer them to a particular couple, based on a pastoral conversation.

Churches that opt in to offer these services will in all likelihood offer the full range of PLF. Other churches may offer prayers as part of a Sunday service in more informal ways, on a case-by-case basis, and it will be up to them to explain and make clear what they would or would not do.

2.2.13 Can Chaplains be required to use or not use the PLF by their employers?

Chaplains who serve in secular settings are subject to conducting their duties in line with the contractual obligations agreed with their employer alongside applicable requirements of ecclesiastical law and the general law. It is recommended that if they think issues are likely to arise in relation to the use or non-use of the PLF they discuss this with their employer and seek an agreed position.

2.2.14 Does the opt-in system protect churches who choose not to opt in from litigation under the Equality Act 2010 (hereafter EA)?

A same-sex couple who want a bespoke service of prayer following a civil marriage might wish to challenge the decision of a PCC not to opt in, or the refusal of a minister whose PCC has opted in not to themselves lead such a service, on the basis that a Common Worship Order for Dedication after a Civil Marriage or the Thanksgiving for Marriage would have been given to an opposite-sex couple, and so they are being treated less favourably on the basis of their sexual orientation. The risk that such legal action will be commenced cannot be avoided, but it is unlikely to be successful. The EA makes it unlawful to discriminate (i.e. treat a person less favourably) because of a 'protected characteristic' (one of which is sexual orientation) but only within certain areas of activity defined in the EA. Discriminatory acts committed outside those areas are not unlawful. There are also some discriminatory acts which, although prima facie unlawful, can be the subject of exceptions which make them lawful.

The only area of activity that is likely to be relevant is 'services and public functions'. It is unlawful for a 'service-provider' to discriminate against a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service (EA s.29(1)). The EA does not comprehensively define 'service' but the statutory code of practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission states (at para 13.69) that acts of worship do not themselves constitute 'services' within the meaning of the EA. This reflects what was said in the explanatory notes to the EA (see Explanatory Notes, para 742).

In the unlikely event that a court were to decide that the EA should be read in a way contrary to that taken by the EHRC, and hold that the provision of 'services' includes worship services, it would be possible for the PCC or the minister to rely on the exemption in the EA (schedule 23, para 2) for 'organizations relating to religion or belief'. That permits an organization the purpose of which is to practise a religion or belief, and its ministers, to restrict participation in its activities by reference to a person's sexual orientation if the restriction is imposed to avoid conflict with strongly held convictions of a significant number of a religion's followers ('the non-conflict principle'). As it is clearly the case that there are a significant number of active members of the Church of England who strongly hold the conviction that it would be wrong to use a PLF bespoke service, this should not be difficult to demonstrate. The fact that the minister and PCC had applied for DEM would likely be of some importance in demonstrating that the non-conflict principle was applicable in relation to the context of the parish.

2.3 Making decisions about seeking further pastoral reassurance

2.3.1 Is there a process for a church to decide to request DEM?

A request for DEM can be made following a decision by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) by simple majority. It shall only make such a decision once it has conducted a consultation with the worshipping community and (where appropriate) considering the relationships with Church of England schools in the parish. The request needs to be made in writing to the Diocesan Bishop

2.3.2 Can a Cathedral request DEM?

Cathedrals cannot request DEM. Diocesan Bishops may delegate functions within a cathedral service to another Bishop in their Regional College. Individual clergy in a cathedral setting can seek additional episcopal care.

2.3.3 What sort of consultation is required to support a request for DEM?

A request for DEM can be made following a decision by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) (or equivalent governance body) by simple majority. It shall only make such a decision once it has conducted a consultation with the worshipping community and (where appropriate) considering the relationships with Church of England schools in the parish.

2.3.4 Can an individual licensed minister seek additional pastoral reassurance?

The Code of Practice and an accompanying Regional Pla makes provision for an incumbent-status licensed minister to request additional episcopal care from a regional Bishop. This care would extend to support in the provision of worship and teaching at the incumbent's church. This can be sought whether a parish has requested DEM or not.

2.3.5 On what basis should team ministries seek DEM?

Parishes within a formally constituted Team Ministry (under a scheme) can request DEM. A principle of decision making at the smallest unit of formal responsibility would apply in such circumstances – either a PCC or DCC. Given the dynamics within a Team or Group context extra care should be taken in the consultation process and additional local pastoral arrangements may be preferable. Additional guidance is available for such circumstances.

2.3.6 Can Bishop's Mission Orders request DEM?

A Bishop's Mission Order can request DEM. This would require a joint decision of the

minister in charge and the registered governing body (i.e. the trustees of the relevant Charitable Incorporated Organisation).

2.3.7 Can chaplains seek pastoral reassurance?

Chaplaincies cannot seek DEM. Licensed ministers employed in chaplaincies can seek episcopal care from a regional Bishop. Chaplains (employed or voluntary) would also be subject to conducting their duties in line with the contractual obligations agreed with their employer.

[This requires further consultation as forms of chaplaincy vary and this section will likely need expansion]

2.3.8 Do parishes need to consult their local community and or deanery in considering DEM?

A request for DEM can be made following a decision by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) by simple majority. It shall only make such a decision once it has conducted a consultation with the worshipping community.

2.3.9 What considerations need to be made for church schools?

Churches should seek a meaningful and reciprocal relationship with schools in their parish or area. Within a school's locality there may be churches and clergy holding different views on many issues. School and church leaders should recognise the existence of these different positions and all relationships between parish churches and clergy and their schools should be built on mutual trust and understanding. Clergy and lay workers exercising their ministry within a school context should discuss and agree to undertake such activities in a manner that respects the legal and pastoral responsibilities which schools exercise towards their pupils, staff and other stakeholders.

Churches and schools are encouraged to note that all traditions within the Church of England are integral expressions of the Church of England. Church schools should continue to engage with clergy and laity from their local churches whatever their formal position on the PLF and whether they have, or have not, sought DEM.

2.4 Disagreement and conflict

Significant disagreement is and always has been part of the life of the church in its journey, and strives toward deeper accord in its shared fellowship in Jesus Christ, not only because of sin but also because Christians have to work out what it means to proclaim and respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ in their particular contexts and cultures (or, as the Declaration of Assent puts it, to ‘proclaim afresh in each generation’).

Responses to disagreement should respect and express the fellowship or communion, the common participation we have in Christ and lead to its deepening, even where we discern serious error and need for repentance in one another.

Disagreeing well in the church is framed by such recognition and impelled by the command to love one another.

It aims to avoid destructive conflict and the settled antagonism of opposed parties, to value every member, and to move ‘creatively through disagreement toward the fullness of agreement in God’s truth, so that this may be proclaimed before God in worship and before humanity in mission.’¹ In practice, it involves the practice of consultation that reflects the participation of every member of the body in the shared gift of divine wisdom, the practice of conciliar decision-making attentive to the wider catholicity of the churches, and a concern for the conscience of each person.

2.4.1 What guidance can be offered to an incumbent of multiple churches with different traditions and wishes regarding the prayers?

It will always be advisable to seek pastoral accommodation in contexts where the wishes and traditions of the churches differ on the use of PLF. Such an approach may require deep love, grace and respect (as well as ‘agreeable disagreement’) between the vicar and the different churches. Love, grace and respect are marks of communities seeking to grow ever more like Christ – where there is a range of convictions across a team of churches, it will be crucial that fellowships never lose sight of their vocation to be sites of character and grace.

Use of commended prayers in regular services will be the prerogative of the incumbent, but it would still be wise for this to be discussed extensively with the PCC, though they would have no right of veto.

In the case of bespoke services, practically, each parish/PCC should have the opportunity to make its own decision, together with the incumbent, on whether to use the PLF, following the guidance in 1.1.4. No church can demand that their incumbent should offer the PLF against their will, nor can they veto their incumbent offering the prayers in a different church if that church’s PCC has agreed to the PLF being offered.

Where more than one clergy person is available, or there are LLMs willing to offer the prayers, it would be possible for the ministry team to agree between them that some ministers do not offer the prayers while others do. However, this could never override the decision of each parish, and the agreement to offer the prayers in any parish must be reached between the incumbent and the PCC.

2.4.2 What guidance can be given in cases of deep differences of opinion between vicar and PCC/church?

When there are deep differences, it can be helpful for the parties involved to make space for de-escalating conflict and reflecting prayerfully. This might entail a season in which a vicar and PCC are advised to take a period of time for prayer and further learning before considering again questions about the use of PLF. During this time, the disagreeing parties might undertake the LLF course together, and/or the Pastoral Principles course, or even simply agree to hold a time when the matter is not on the agenda. External help and facilitation are often a key to having better conversations where each party can have space to articulate their views and feeling without having to simultaneously hold the process for the entire room.

Every Diocese should issue guidance that is appropriate to their local context, and reflects the availability and skills of local staff, advocates and advisors who may be able to help. This might include deanery chapters, senior staff, MDR consultants, and clergy counselling or dispute advisory services. Bringing in outside trained facilitators would also be important, but would need to be at the invitation of/with the agreement of the incumbent.

If differences over the PLF and the wider questions it connects to threaten a pastoral breakdown between clergy and PCC, the archdeacon should be brought in at the earliest opportunity.

2.4.3 What support is there for clergy in cases of conflict with their congregation, with PCC's, with the Bishop, or with schools or other organisations they work with?

This question is one that is best fleshed out at local level, with knowledge of local resources. As above, it might include deanery chapters, senior staff, MDR consultants, and clergy counselling or dispute advisory services. Dioceses should also consider facilitated support groups for clergy and lay ministers.

In addition, clergy and lay ministers are encouraged to speak to their spiritual director, and, if appropriate, seek the advice of a work consultant or coach.

2.4.4 How do we protect clergy against malicious claims (of

discrimination, or of conduct unbecoming)?

It is not possible to protect clergy against all malicious claims if someone is determined to complain. However, ongoing work around the new

Clergy Conduct Measure needs to take this matter into close consideration.

What does and does not constitute grounds for a complaint needs to be made clear at national and Diocesan levels: if clergy are acting in line with what has been agreed nationally then they cannot be the subject of a complaint, so a complaint should not be raised, and if it is, it should be dismissed.

It is also important to note that the use of the PLF is a matter of 'doctrine, ritual and ceremonial', and therefore specifically excluded from the current CDM and draft CCM. The Bishop should be consulted in order to arrange pastoral and practical support where needed.

Any formal proceedings relating to use of the PLF would probably need to be brought under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963 (on the basis that they involved matter of doctrine, ritual or ceremonial) rather than under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

2.4.5 What should a church do if attacked (in person, online, etc.) for their stance on sexuality?

Churches should respond as they would normally do when attacked for any reason, by contacting their Diocesan communications team for advice, and act on that advice. If the action involves threats to persons or criminal damage, they should report it to the police.

It is good practice for all churches to develop a simple communications policy about who responds, and when/how, to any attacks, however they come, regardless of the motive.

Support should also be offered through area/rural deans and archdeacons.

2.4.6 What are the expectations and boundaries for clergy in speaking about their personal views?

Clergy in the Church of England have longstanding freedom in expressing a variety of views, and twice during the creation of the current CDM Synod rejected the possibility of a form of misconduct for expressing particular opinions. The expectations and boundaries would remain what they currently are under the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy. Neither clergy nor LLMs should engage in any kind of hate speech, incite violence or engage in actions that would be criminalized.

All ministers should balance their right to free speech with appropriate sensitivity and respect for the views and lives of others, and have particular regard for the way in which their own views may affect their parishioners, and their partners in the community.

2.4.7 Is there a social media code of conduct for how we speak of one another in public, in times of deep disagreement on sexuality?

There is no official national set of guidelines on conduct online, however, the principles outlined in the previous question apply here.

The [Pastoral Principles](#) offer powerful ways of reflecting on how we relate to one another in both online and offline life.

Dioceses, benefices or churches may consider adapting the Church of England [social media guidelines](#) for local use.

2.4.8 What protection to freedom of conscience will be given to lay people who are currently involved in weddings EG vergers, choir, bellringers, and organists who do not wish to be involved in services using the prayers of love and faith?

It would not be appropriate to force a lay person to participate in a bespoke PLF service, just as clergy cannot be forced to do so.

If the PLF are being used in the context of a regular act of worship, this would be more complicated, especially in the case of an organist or member of the choir if they have a contract, and especially in smaller churches where there may not be other organists available locally, even at deanery level.

In both cases, a pastoral conversation with the lay people involved, which respects their conscience, would need to happen with a view to reach an agreement on the way forward. If employment issues arise, advice should be taken from the archdeacon and/or the Diocesan registrar.

2.4.9 Can an incumbent say that they do not wish the church building to be used for all services using the PLF or would there be an expectation that they would allow the building to be used by other ministers if the PCC wishes them to be?

In terms of the use of the PLF as part of regular public worship, it would be wise for

incumbent and PCC to agree a policy, but use of the prayers falls under the discretion of the incumbent.

Churches can only be used for bespoke services by agreement between the incumbent and the PCC following which they opt in to using the prayers and notify the Diocese that they are doing so. It would be perfectly possible for an incumbent to agree that the building could be used for services led by another minister if the PCC wished them to be, but this would have to be freely agreed by the incumbent.

2.4.10 What will be done in response to accusations of homophobia, coercive prayer/conversion therapy and safeguarding risk?

The decision of a church or minister to adopt the PLF or not is a statement about the theological position it holds, and does not reflect positively or negatively on its safeguarding practices. All churches are required to comply with House of Bishops' Safeguarding Guidance and Safeguarding Code of Practice, and therefore people can reasonably expect safeguarding allegations to be dealt with in the same way regardless of where they might occur.

Instances of, for example, spiritual abuse or coercive prayer can occur anywhere, in any denomination, and in churches of all theological positions. The critical factor therefore relates to how healthy its culture is, how well people can challenge unhealthy behaviour, and how well disclosures of abuse are responded to.

Guidelines for good practice in pastoral prayer, [Teach Us to Pray](#) are being prepared and will help churches examine their own practices to ensure healthy practices of prayer with those who ask for it.

Where the alleged behaviour amounts to a crime, this should be reported to the police, and in relation to clergy, a CDM should be considered. It is important that adequate pastoral care is provided to the person reporting the crime, irrespective of both parties' theological positions.

There may be occasions where the behaviour does not amount to a crime, but is still deemed to be unhealthy Christian behaviour, and is at risk of becoming spiritually abusive. Examples of such behaviours and potential responses can be found in the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults](#). It is important that at very local levels, all church officers and indeed congregations are aware of (and vigilant about) the hallmarks of a healthy culture, and the indications that either an individual, or a group of individuals, may be moving the wrong way along the spectrum of behaviour.

Where the person making the accusation is a child, young person or vulnerable adult, then the relevant [Practice Guidance](#) must be followed.

2.5 Consideration for other local contexts

2.5.1 How can church schools be encouraged to work with clergy holding a breadth of different views?

Church schools are expected to have a meaningful and reciprocal relationship with their parish church. This relationship will often extend to other churches in the locality and deanery. A school should endeavour to foster a good relationship with its parish church where possible.

Within a school's locality there will be churches and clergy holding a breadth of views on many issues. The Prayers of Love and Faith have been authorized for use but not everyone will agree they should be used or want to use them, and School leaders should recognize the validity of these different positions within the Church of England.

All relationships between schools and their parish churches and clergy should be built on mutual trust and understanding. This should include understanding and respecting the different contexts of school and parish and the particular legal responsibilities which schools exercise towards their students, staff and other stakeholders.

At times a school may need to hold a range of views together including those of clergy, staff and parents and be a role model for good disagreement. [The Pastoral Principles](#), developed as part of the Living in Love and Faith process provide a framework for good disagreement.

Whilst ultimately the guidance and the law (referenced above) must take precedence over the range of views that exist locally, school leaders will need to carefully navigate these situations and ensure that their response is proportionate. Where disagreements exist which require mediation or further support, a school should call upon the expertise within its Diocesan Board of Education.

2.5.2 What advice is there for clergy in relating to their local school's expectations in terms of what is taught and modelled?

Clergy exercise an enormous privilege when entering a school, particularly if this is the school that is attached to their parish church. They may exercise a pastoral role, serve as a governor, be invited to lead Collective Worship and take part in the teaching of parts of the curriculum as an expert from the local Christian community.

Schools should have a clear written policies for visitors which all visitors, including clergy, should be asked to adhere to. They should also have written policies and plans for Collective Worship, Religious Education (RE) Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Policies for visiting speakers may also be in place. Where policies and plans are written well, they can help everyone to feel safe in expressing their opinions and beliefs in ways which are not threatening or discriminatory. These policies will be written in line with up to date legislation and the school's distinctive Christian vision, and will be scrutinized through the inspection process.

For example, the [Goodness and Mercy resources for Relationships and Sex Education](#) exemplify how children can learn about different kind of relationships they will encounter in modern Britain, how those relationships can be legally recognized by civil marriage and civil partnership and how the Church of England teaches that Holy Matrimony is the joining together of one man and one woman.

Recent guidance on anti-bullying (in particular on preventing homophobic bullying) [Flourishing for All](#), might be helpful in this context too.

When discussing differences that exist within the Church, careful use of language such as 'some Christians believe', 'other Christians believe' is more helpful to holding a range of views together than absolute language. Clergy should be also mindful that there may be a range of family groupings and relationships represented within the school community who should not be made to feel alienated, different or wrong.

2.5.3 What should be done in case of conflict over an ex-officio (clergy) member of the governors over sexuality?

In maintained church schools the incumbent is usually an ex-officio member of the governing body and the PCC, deanery and Diocese may appoint Foundation Governors. Many academies have representation from the local clergy on local governing committees in order to retain the historic local relationship between church and school.

Governing bodies may wish to consider a working agreement in place with an ex-officio governors. This good practice is recommended by some Dioceses and could cover the postholder being:

- willing to promote the views and policies of the parish and Diocese (and indeed of the Church of England as a whole in terms of its

published Vision for Education) as appropriate at meetings of the Governing Board and at other meetings concerning, for example, any change in the future status of the school;

- a link to ensure the school features regularly on PCC and other local church leadership team agenda and vice versa;
- a visible presence in church and in school;
- prepared both to represent the parish during a SIAMS Inspection and to explain to the Inspection Team how parish and school work together;
- prepared to undertake ongoing training as required;
- prepared to set aside time to meet and to pray regularly with the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher about both parish and school.

All governors, regardless of how they hold office, should understand their duties under the relevant legislation. Many organizations have role descriptions in place for all governors and trustees and will ask office holders to subscribe to a code of conduct which will often be linked to the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles) and may contain explicit reference to the Equality Act. These role descriptors and codes of conduct are useful to revisit at times of disagreement and tension. Many Dioceses will have a governance support officer who can provide further assistance in navigating disagreements. Further information on the roles and duties of governors and trustees can be obtained from organizations such as the National Governance Association www.nga.org.uk and the Confederation of School Trusts www.cstuk.org.uk.

1 Faith and Order Commission, *Communion and Disagreement* (GS Misc 1139, 2016).
[communion_and_disagreement_faoc_report_gs_misc_1139.pdf](http://www.churchofengland.org/communion_and_disagreement_faoc_report_gs_misc_1139.pdf) (churchofengland.org)

3 Guidance for use of the Prayers of Love and Faith

3.1 **Discussing the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith with couples**

3.1.1 **Can couples choose what Prayers to use or not use?**

When a couple asks for prayer for their relationship it would be appropriate for any minister to discuss with them the reasons for their request and to share with them the possibilities open to them. The suite of prayers allows for a discussion about what is most suitable in their context.

3.1.2 **Can a couple choose what is included in a service of public worship?**

In the course of pastoral conversation to prepare for the service, couples can work with the minister taking the service to choose appropriate texts, music, and other materials. It is for the minister to ensure that these satisfy the canonical requirements for public worship.

3.1.3 **If a church offers the prayers, do couples have an automatic right to have a service?**

There is no legal entitlement to these prayers, unlike the entitlement of opposite-sex couples to get married in a parish church where they live or have a qualifying connection.

The offer of a bespoke service in a particular case is at the discretion of the local minister. Having said this, it would be good practice to have a pastoral conversation, and, if the church normally offers such services, the minister should have a valid pastoral or other reason (including reasons of conscience) for refusing, and be able to support the couple in understanding their decision. Ministers should be satisfied that the couple's relationship is permanent, faithful, stable and exclusive.

Conversely, because there is no legal requirement for residence or a qualifying connection, couples are free to ask for the prayers within any church in their area.

3.1.4 **Are there prayers for single people or friends?**

There are prayers already available for many different life situations, which ministers should be familiar with. However, one stream of further work identified in

LLF was to give more attention to singleness and friendship, and additional prayers may be part of that work.

A number of prayers in the resource section of the PLF may be suitable for friends, and the sample service for a Covenanted Friendship shows how this may be shaped.

3.1.5 Can the prayers be used with opposite-sex couples?

The PLF were designed specifically for same-sex couples, for whom no other provision is currently made. There are prayers included in the PLF that may be suitable for opposite-sex couples, some of which are already commended elsewhere.

The possibility of a bespoke service however is conceived with same-sex couples in mind only, as there is already ample provision for opposite-sex couples which is not available for same-sex couples. If an opposite sex couple wanted a service following a civil marriage, there is existing provision in Common Worship with [the Order for Dedication after a Civil Marriage](#) or [the Thanksgiving for Marriage](#).

3.1.6 Can the prayers be used within services of public worship?

The PLF are designed for use in a range of contexts, following conversations between couple and minister about what pastoral need the prayers meet and how the church is able to respond.

Materials from the PLF can be used in the regular worship of a church or other community; for instance, in the Parish Eucharist, Morning or Evening Prayer, or a Service of the Word. In these circumstances, prayers from the Resource Section could be used at (for instance) the times when occasional prayers are normally said (e.g., in the Prayers of Intercession at Holy Communion or in a Service of the Word, or after the Third Collect at Evensong) or at another appropriate time.

The PLF can also be used in 'bespoke' services, which take place explicitly to pray to God with a same-sex couple and would not have taken place otherwise. The Service Structures in the PLF (see [Annex 1](#)), together with their Notes, lay out how such a service could be constructed. The PLF provide a way for a couple's relationship to be rejoiced in by the people of God and remembered in prayer. However, these services are not a form of marriage service, and must not be made to resemble a marriage service, and any adaptation or new texts added by the minister here or elsewhere in the service must not involve the incorporation of the blessings contained in the Marriage Service from the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Common Worship*.

3.1.7 Do the PLF presuppose sexual activity? Could or should a minister ask questions of the couple with regards to sexual activity?

The PLF make no assumptions with regards to sexual intimacy. Instead, they seek to encourage the relationship as a whole to display virtues of stability, faithfulness, loyalty and exclusivity, and to seek God’s help in growing in those. It would not be appropriate for a minister to ask questions that concentrate on the details of any couple’s intimate relationship – whether this is a couple asking for the PLF, or an opposite-sex wedding couple. Having said this, appropriate preparation should encourage a positive, lifegiving, mutual, faithful, respectful relationship. The focus of preparation should be on each partner enabling the other to flourish and grow more fully into the likeness of Christ as well as how their household may model increasing grace and loving generosity.

3.1.8 To whom can the prayers be offered?

The decision to offer the PLF in any form is a primarily pastoral decision to be taken by the minister in conversation with a couple. The discernment of the minister here is paramount, though they can only offer the PLF to consenting adults over the age of 18, and in bespoke services only if the parish has opted in.

Faithfulness and commitment to long-term relationships matter. They are appropriate subjects to discuss with an enquiring couple. As with all pastoral contact around relationships, wisdom and good discernment will be necessary. Appropriate pastoral care and guidance can be provided.

3.1.9 Can the prayers be offered after a couple has contracted a civil marriage or civil partnership?

Yes, they can.

3.1.10 What are covenanted friendships?

Friendship is an important category of relationship in Scripture and in Christian tradition. Many of us will have a number of friendships, and these will have different degrees of intimacy and commitment. Christians belong to those whom Jesus Christ calls his friends, for whom he lays down his life. Christian friendship involves mutual love and harmony with one another, sharing one another’s burdens and joys, in conformity to Christ. It is something more than a bond over common interests, tastes or affiliations. Friendship is a form of affectionate, hospitable shared Christian life we need to recover. However, it is possible that some such friendships take on a special meaning, or that two people may want to express the depth of commitment and trust of their friendship, for the deeper pursuit of its

goods, in a more formal way. An example of this is found in the covenant between David and Jonathan in the Bible (1 Samuel 20), and there are other precedents in Christian tradition.

There is no template for this type of covenant, and no preconditions. It is the free decision of friends who wish to express their mutual love and loyalty before God in a deeper way. The conditions needed are defined by these friends, as are the type of goods they commit to embody. The inclusion of covenanted friendships in the PLF reflects the importance of deep friendship, particularly in a world in which commitment is often associated only with sexual relationships. Covenanted friendships in contrast embody a type of relationship that is both committed and non-sexual, which is not exclusive, yet deeply meaningful, particular, and seeking to grow in holiness.

3.1.11 Can prayers for covenanted friendship be offered to any set of friends? Do they presume exclusivity? Can married people enter into a covenanted friendship with other people?

Friendships are relationships of an entirely different nature to marriage. Those who wish to seal a covenanted friendship may be of the same sex or opposite sexes. The friends may be married to other people, or unmarried. The friendship is by definition not sexually intimate. It will likely be expressed in practical forms of sharing aspects of life together.

As with all friendships, care will need to be taken to identify the nature of the covenant and how the bonds of covenanted friendship will complement other friendships and (where relevant) the bonds of marriage.

Covenants with respect to friendship are of a fundamentally different nature to a marriage covenant, and this difference needs to be explored thoroughly. If a person seeking to enter a covenanted friendship is married, it would be good practice to explore how this different type of covenant may impact or enrich the distinct and still deeper covenant of marriage to which they are already committed.

3.1.12 Can churches choose to use the prayers for covenanted friendship, but not the other PLF

Yes, churches can choose which aspects of the PLF they want to draw on for their own particular context.

3.1.13 How can local churches (individually or together) offer

appropriate relationship support in terms of both preparation and follow up?

Churches should follow good practice developed with any other couple when working with those requesting the PLF: pastoral conversations and preparation as well as post-service contact and pastoral follow up are appropriate and show the care and concern of the local church, and their commitment to support a couple in their growth in commitment, love and faith.

It would be at the discretion of churches locally to develop further resources, and consider whether preparation and follow up could be done jointly. The sharing of good practice and learning points at deanery level should be encouraged.

3.1.14 Do we ask questions about previous relationships (including, if the person has been previously married, checking that they are legally divorced)?

The work of preparation with any couple needs to be done with kindness, generosity, and sensitivity. Good preparation does involve speaking of previous relationships and the way in which they may colour the current relationship, whether through learning and experience, or the presence of scars, or both. The aim of the conversation is not to judge the worth of a couple but to enable them to grow in their current relationship and establish solid foundations. Where a previous relationship is not formally dissolved, offering any kind of public prayers must be delayed until this is resolved.

Grace and generosity need to be the hallmark of such conversations, with a recognition that there is much that will remain unsaid, and that relationships fail for all kinds of reasons. Whilst it is appropriate for a minister to ask about former relationships, it would not be appropriate to push or pry.

3.1.15 If someone has been divorced, or had a civil partnership dissolved, does this affect whether we can offer the prayers? Should appropriate prayers of repentance be included?

This should be approached with an appropriate sense of pastoral tenderness and attention to God's abundant grace. There will be individual circumstances in which there may well be a longing for an opportunity for repentance, but it will be important to contextualize that in a rich and gracious sense that while all enter marriage and civil partnerships with a commitment to lifelong faithfulness and devotion, some relationships break down for a multitude of reasons, and new promise is offered in new relationships; no sense of judgment or condemnation should be implied by any kind of conversation about relationships which have come to an end.

However, equally, if after conversation with the couple the minister feels uncomfortable that it would be appropriate to offer the prayers, they should feel under no compulsion to do so. It would be pastorally appropriate for the minister to be clear about their reasons for not doing so as part of the conversation, but again with no sense of judgement or condemnation.

3.1.16 What prayers and services are appropriate for a couple where one or both partners have transitioned?

It is already possible for a person who has transitioned to marry in their legally acquired gender within an opposite-sex marriage in church, but the usual legal obligation for parish priests to marry them does not apply.

The PLF were designed to be broad and generous. It would be entirely appropriate and consistent with the intent of the PLF for them to be used to affirm the goods found in the relationship of a couple where one partner has transitioned, and to pray for God's help and support as they seek to grow in love and faith together.

3.2 Guidelines for a public service including the Prayers of Love and Faith

3.2.1 How should the PLF be used within public worship?

Materials from the PLF can be used in the regular worship of a church or other community; for instance, in the Parish Eucharist, Morning or Evening Prayer, or a Service of the Word. In these circumstances, prayers from the Resource Section could be used at (for instance) the times when occasional prayers are normally said (e.g., in the Prayers of Intercession at Holy Communion or in a Service of the Word, or after the Third Collect at Evensong) or at another appropriate time.

The PLF can also be used in 'bespoke' services, which take place explicitly to pray to God with a same-sex couple and would not have taken place otherwise. The Service Structures in the PLF (see Annex 1), together with their Notes, lay out how such a service could be constructed. The PLF provide a way for a couple's relationship to be rejoiced in by the people of God and remembered in prayer. However, these services are not a form of marriage service, and must not be made to resemble a marriage service, and any adaptation or new texts added by the minister here or elsewhere in the service must not involve the incorporation of the blessings contained in the Marriage Service from the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Common Worship*.

3.2.2 Are there any differences between use of the PLF in regular services or in bespoke services?

Use of the PLF in the regular worship of a church or other community might be appropriate for many who would seek the prayers: just as Sunday worship in many parishes marks significant moments in the lives of worshippers (e.g. parishioners moving away, retiring, taking up a new role) so same-sex couples may wish to pray in the loving context of their church community gathered for worship.

Other couples might prefer to pray outside the usual gatherings for worship in a community, in a special service (a 'bespoke service') centered around the PLF. Such a service would represent a particular and distinctive liturgical act – a rite for marking a significant stage in a committed and faithful same-sex relationship.

In both cases, it will be important to identify what the use of the PLF signifies and that the PLF do not constitute a form of blessing for a same-sex marriage. In the case of regular worship this might be more easily established. Care will be necessary in planning bespoke services to balance the pastoral needs of the couple and the requirements for public worship in the Church of England.

3.2.3 Are lay ministers authorized to offer the prayers?

Licensed ministers, both lay and ordained, may offer the PLF in pastoral conversation and in regular worship. In bespoke services, this is done with the assent of the minister with cure of souls and after a parish has opted in.

3.2.4 How might we include children in conversation/preparation/the ceremony?

Children can be included in the same way as we might include them in preparing for and participating in other occasional services. Decisions on how this may happen rely on the wisdom, experience and discernment of local ministers.

3.2.5 When the PLF are used in a service of public worship, should that fact be recorded in the service register?

When the PLF are used within a regular service, a note can be made in the service register. A bespoke service should also be recorded in the service register, with its own entry. No record should be made in the register of marriage services.

3.2.6 Can some form of certificate be issued?

Churches can design a keepsake card if they wish to do so in order to mark the occasion. This would be purely commemorative and have no official or legal status. Such certificates must not suggest or imply in their wording or design that they commemorate or are proof of a marriage.

3.2.7 Are there things we cannot do in a bespoke service using the PLF, in terms of words and symbols?

Ministers should take care in the use of words and symbolic actions such as vesture that these are reverent and seemly, and do not indicate any departure from the doctrine of the Church of England. The PLF should not give the impression of simulating marriage. No parts of the authorized text for the solemnization of Holy Matrimony may be used in a service using the PLF.

As for any other occasional services, the shape and content of the service should be discussed and planned within a pastoral setting with the persons seeking the prayers. Ministers should encourage couples to consider the aesthetics of the service as part of the preparation, recognising that, in as far as is possible, all involved should avoid giving the service the appearance of a marriage.

As in all worship, contextual aesthetics matters, and care should be taken that symbols and actions do not speak louder than words.

3.2.8 Are there expectations about dress (for the couple and for clergy)? Should couples be told not to wear traditional wedding dress? What about other wedding traditions?

Pastoral preparation with the couple should cover the fact that this is not a wedding, in the same way that Prayers of Dedication after a Civil Marriage, or the Blessing of a Marriage, are not services of Holy Matrimony. The use of the prayers in the service should not attempt to resemble Holy Matrimony. The aims and nature of the service should be clearly explained as part of a warm welcome to all who attend.

What couples choose to wear, the music they choose, how different people are involved in the service, chosen readings and so on, are rooted in evolving cultures and subcultures rather than in theological or liturgical principle. How these are incorporated (or not) properly belongs to decisions made locally by the minister after conversation between minister and couple. Ministers should encourage couples to consider the aesthetics of the service as part of the preparation, recognising that, in as far as is possible, all involved should avoid giving the service the appearance of a marriage.

As in all worship, contextual aesthetics matters, and care should be taken that symbols and actions do not speak louder than words.

3.2.9 How much space is there to adapt the service, and to explain what it means?

The PLF may be used in any appropriate form of service authorized for use in the Church of England, normally within A Service of the Word or within Holy Communion, as the outline orders provided suggest. In those services, they constitute variations not of substantial importance, provided that they are not 'contrary to, or indicative of a departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter'. Variations may be made to the Prayers themselves as long as they meet the same tests.

A form of words to explain the service can be found in the preface to the PLF Resource Section.

3.2.10 What happens if the relationship prayed for through the PLF comes to an end?

Just as with the breakdown of any relationship, compassionate pastoral support is the best way to care for a couple whose relationship has broken down. The PLF do

not affect a couple's legal status, and there are therefore no official steps to be taken.

3.2.11 What financial contribution is expected for the PLF?

No fee is chargeable, but payment may be requested to cover direct expenses associated with a bespoke service.

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4 Registrations and consultation processes

4.1 Registration for PLF & DEM

4.1.1 How do churches register to use the PLF?

Further work needed on this section.

Use of the PLF in public services is always on an 'opt-in' basis. If a church decides not to use the PLF, there is no need to register. However, for the period of discernment, it would be valuable to know of churches who choose to use the PLF in bespoke services, and/or who want to seek Pastoral Reassurance and/or DEM, or who want to do neither, but voice their stance on the PLF.

4.1.2 How do churches register to request DEM?

A request for DEM can be made following a decision by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) by simple majority. It shall only make such a decision once it has conducted a consultation with the worshipping community and (where appropriate) considering the relationships with Church of England schools in the parish. The request needs to be made in writing to the Diocesan Bishop.

Registration will be with the diocese (via the Bishop's office) in the first instance providing the opportunity for the Bishop to share in the cure of souls and to engage in the pastoral care of the parish. Where churches opt in to indicate use of the prayers through A Church Near You, these details will be held on a national database to facilitate the gathering of feedback on their use.

4.1.3 Do churches/ministers need to register to use the PLF in private or in existing services?

There is no requirement for churches or ministers to register the use of PLF in private or in existing regular worship services. However, it would assist the process of discernment if ministers and churches are willing to engage with the gathering of data in regard to their use and in the growth of 'learning' for the Church. As well as the opportunity to 'opt in' to the use of PLF within bespoke services; and the possibility of opting for DEM; there is an additional opt in for those who wish to participate in the three-year process of discernment. This is open to those who both do not wish to use any PLF material and those who may use it privately or in regular worship but not in bespoke services.

4.1.4 Do individual ministers seeking DEM need to register?

Only incumbent status licensed ministers can request episcopal care from a regional Bishop. This care would extend to support in the provision of worship and teaching at the incumbent's church. This can be sought whether a parish has requested DEM or not.

4.1.5 Will registration to use the PLF be public?

Further work needed on this section.

Each Diocese will hold a register of those churches which have opted in to using bespoke services. Dioceses are encouraged to make this information public on their Diocesan website. See also 2.1.3 for what information parishes might wish to publish on their own website or on their church page on a ChurchNearYou.

4.1.6 Will requests and provision of DEM be made public?

Further work needed on this section.

To be determined, but likely similar to the above. Though this will not be sought to be gathered through ACNY

4.2 Period of Discernment

The period of discernment is a three year period in which the Church will gather learning from the use of PLF and the uptake of DEM, to determine next steps in the LLF process.

4.2.1 What information will be sought in the period of discernment?

The period of discernment is one in which the Church can learn from the experience of the use of the PLF; the requirements of DEM; and listen to the voice of God through the conversation of Dioceses through debate. We will therefore want to determine the following:
Section to be completed.

4.2.2 What optional feedback mechanisms are available?

The LLF process will be continuing its work within the life of the Church and this will be subject to the ongoing scrutiny of the General Synod. We anticipate that stories and feedback from within Dioceses shared in Synod debates will form part of the growing discernment of the Church at large. In addition, the work of Lit Comm and FAOC will be shaped by the feedback it receives.

4.2.3 How will the information gathered in the period of discernment be used?

Section to be completed.

Appendix 1 – PLF Service Structure

The House of Bishops has now commended the Prayers of Love and Faith as being suitable for use by ministers in any service in exercise of their discretion under Canon B 5. Where this happens outside regularly scheduled worship (i.e. in ‘bespoke services’) this happens at the discretion of the minister with cure of souls.

These Service Structures are provided to show how such material can be incorporated into two familiar forms of service: A Service of the Word (details of which are found in the *Common Worship* main volume, pp.21ff) and Holy Communion (pp.157ff).

The Prayers of Love and Faith offer an opportunity for couples to mark a significant state in a committed and faithful same-sex relationship, whether in the regular worship of a church community or in a service designed for the purpose. In either case, the Prayers celebrate the goods of their relationship, and ask for God’s guidance and care as they grow in faith and love. They are designed for use with couples whose relationship is faithful, exclusive, permanent, and stable. The PLF provide a way for a couple’s relationship to be rejoiced in by the people of God and remembered in prayer. However, these services are not a form of marriage service, and must not be made to resemble a marriage service.

As Canon B 5 states, all variations in forms of service and all forms of service used at the discretion of a minister shall be reverent and seemly and shall be neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.

An Outline Order for a Service of the Word

Preparation

- The Welcome
- The Collect

The Liturgy of the Word

- Readings
- Sermon

Prayers

- The Dedication
- Acclamation
- Prayers of Intercession
- The Lord’s Prayer

Conclusion

The Dismissal

An Outline Order for a Celebration of Holy Communion

Preparation

The Welcome
Prayers of Penitence
The Collect

The Liturgy of the Word

Readings
Gospel Reading
Sermon
The Creed

Prayers

The Dedication
Acclamation
Prayers of Intercession

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace
Preparation of the Table
Taking of the Bread and Wine
The Eucharistic Prayer
The Lord's Prayer
Breaking of the Bread
Giving of Communion
Prayer after Communion

Conclusion

The Dismissal

Notes to the Service

1. Structure

This structure corresponds with that of A Service of the Word, or that of A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion. The minister should have reference to the relevant Notes, including for the celebration of Holy Communion where appropriate (*Common Worship* main volume, pp.21-26 and 330-335).

2. Preparation

The minister should greet the congregation and the couple with a liturgical greeting and may introduce the service in his or her own words. Prayers of Penitence and an authorized Absolution are always used within a service of Holy Communion. The Preparation should conclude with a Collect from the Resource Section, such as:

Almighty God,
you send your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of all your people.
Open the hearts of *N* and *N* to the riches of his grace,
that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

3. **The Liturgy of the Word**

There should preferably be at least two readings from the Bible. When this Service is combined with Holy Communion on Sundays and Principal Holy Days, the readings of the day are normally used. A sermon will normally be preached, even if this is not the principal service on Sunday.

4. **The Creed**

The Creed or authorized Affirmation of Faith may be omitted except at the principal service on Sundays and Principal Holy Days.

5. **The Dedication**

The Dedication may include prayers for God's blessing on the couple, which may be used as pastoral circumstances dictate, and at the discretion of the minister. A choice of texts which pray for God's blessing is provided in the Resource Section. Alternatively, other prayers from the Resource Section may be chosen for The Dedication, including a prayer for the sealing of a covenanted friendship. Any adaptation or new texts added by the minister here or elsewhere in the service must not involve the incorporation of the blessings contained in the Marriage Service from the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Common Worship*.

6. **The Acclamation**

The Acclamation provided in the Resource Section, or another suitable responsorial text, may be used, or a hymn or song sung instead.

7. **Prayers of Intercession**

Suitable prayers for the couple from the Resource Section may be used, or new prayers of intercession may be written. Care should be taken to ensure that they fall within the discretion of the minister under Canon B 5, particularly Canon B 5.3. The couple may wish to pray together, either at the conclusion of the intercessions or, in a service of Holy

Communion, as a Prayer after Communion before the Dismissal.

8. **Preparation of the Table**

At the Preparation of the Table in a service of Holy Communion, one or both of the couple, or their family and friends, may be invited to bring the elements of bread and wine to the holy table.

9. **The Dismissal**

The liturgical blessing which forms part of the Conclusion is offered for the whole congregation.

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Appendix 2 - Glossary

Code of Practice (CoP)

Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM)

Episcopal Reference Group (ERG)

Independent Review Panel (IRP)

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

Pastoral Reassurance (PR)

Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF)

LLF WG Commentary Document

1. Introduction

1.1. This document provides a commentary to the detailed proposals for wider introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF). This work has been undertaken following support for an outline proposal for wider use of the PLF as commended materials for use under the authorisation of Canon B5; alongside the introduction of further Pastoral Reassurance (PR) based on Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM) for a three-year period of discernment.

1.2. The proposal has three main components: *A Bishops Statement* with commitments on the ongoing discernment needed within Living in Love and Faith (LLF);¹ a *Code of Practice for Delegated Episcopal Ministry (CoP)*; redrafted *Pastoral Guidance for the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith and Pastoral Reassurance*. Additional guidance for *Vocations and Ministry* will also be drafted.

1.3. This proposal was developed by three Working Groups under the Terms of Reference attached in [Annex A](#). The final form of the proposal, as per the terms of reference, will be agreed by the LLF Programme Board. The membership of the Working Groups included people with differing views on the introduction of the PLF and further PR. The LLF Programme Board is responsible for compiling and reporting the recommendations from the LLF Working Groups to the House and College of Bishops.

1.4. Members of the Working Groups have not been asked to agree individually or collectively to the whole proposal. Whilst broad consensus has been achieved in some areas, there are key topics and detailed points where substantive differences remain and/or different approaches are favoured. It has been agreed that members of the Working Groups individually or collectively may publicly

¹ At this point in time, a final draft of the Bishops' Statement has not yet been agreed.

represent any misgivings. This will continue to help further consideration of the remaining challenges.

1.5. The issues highlighted in this commentary will be key areas of consideration in the next phase of development. This includes ongoing engagement with Working Groups and inviting Diocesan Synods and other church bodies and networks to provide further feedback and input. In addition to seeking comments on the general principles in the proposal, these consultations aim to inform judgments on the practical implementation of the proposal, including the workability of regional schemes of Delegated Episcopal Ministry.

1.6. Section two of this commentary covers some of the general or ‘higher-level’ challenges that the proposal seeks to navigate. This includes consideration that, whilst they have positively engaged in the Working Group process, some members of the Working Groups remain unsupportive of the proposal in general.

1.7. Section three provides commentary on specific elements of the proposal. It highlights specific concerns from the different perspectives, or where general agreement has not yet been reached on complex or more challenging contexts.

2. Overarching Themes: Navigating principled tensions

2.1. LLF has been and remains a journey of learning for the Church. Ongoing engagement with the Working Groups and wider stakeholders highlighted tensions in at least three overarching areas, but also significant commonality in continuing to pursue the furthering welcome and inclusion for LGBTQI+ people in the life and mission of the church.

Based on extensive stakeholder engagement, our assessment is that the three high level areas of tension include the following:

- The ‘overall direction of travel’ or the ‘destination’ of work relating to LLF;
- The processes that have been used or will be used to determine next steps;

- That agreement on any proposal will need to include ‘the whole picture’ – not only the use of the PLF and Pastoral Reassurance for their wider introduction, but also decisions and any subsequent process around permitting, or disapplying discipline, for clergy in same sex marriage.

However, it is also important to stress that despite these differences, there is a clear sense of common cause across differing perspectives, which is the need to take tangible action to include and support LGBTQI+ people in the life and ministry of the church.

2.2. The introduction of the PLF is based on these being a pastoral accommodation for a time of crisis (in the Theological and Pastoral Introduction to the PLF).

There is no presumption in considering next steps towards equal marriage and the further doctrinal and ecclesiological questions that would need to be addressed. However, as stated in the theological rationale for the PLF, the introduction of the PLF does say something about the theological and pastoral responses of the church to same-sex couples [Pastoral Guidance 1.1- The Prayers of Love and Faith].

2.3. A key premise of this proposal is the wider introduction of PLF alongside additional PR through DEM during a three-year period of discernment. A crucial dimension of this period is to deepen broader understanding over the ‘type of disagreement’ LLF presents [See GS Misc 1406 and GS Misc 1407]. However, feedback from current Working Group participants and wider stakeholders has identified that to support this, a clearer rationale for the period of discernment needs to be articulated. First in providing clarity on the decisions needed at the end of the period of discernment, and the processes required for these. Second in developing a fuller understanding of how this period of discernment will contribute to longer term discussions on matters relating to *Living in Love and Faith*. The proposal would be enhanced with clarification on how a Canon B2 process might follow the period of discernment, and the implications this would have for the PLF as commended resources.

2.4. The LLF Next Steps process encountered significant tensions in finding a basis of agreement. One of the unintended weaknesses identified in the Next Steps processes concerns the status and authorisation of the PLF. The origins of this proposal lie in work conducted in November 2023 to identify the possible options for authorisation ([See GS2328](#)). In March 2024, the LLF Working Groups considered these options at their first residential meeting in Leicester. They identified the potential of a B5 route alongside the introduction of clear PR as feasible, at least within a period of discernment. The proposal being outlined here is based on the use of the PLF as commended resources under Canon B 5, i.e. Bishops may *commend* forms of service for use at the minister's discretion. Such forms of service are used under the authority of the minister; they are not, and are not required to be, *authorised* by the Bishops. This approach was seen as viable and commanded broad support at the first Leicester residential. Crucially however, this was seen as requiring a clear and substantive accompanying form of PR.

2.5. The proposal rests on the stated understanding of offering the PLF Resource Section as a form of pastoral provision, that “the PLF do not seek to simulate marriage, or pretend that the Church has made a decision to extend marriage to same-sex couples and that making the PLF available for couples in an active sexual relationship does involve any departure from doctrine, it nevertheless does not involve a departure from doctrine “in any essential matter” ([see legal note GS2358](#)). A theological rationale for this approach is provided in annex H of [GS2328](#). Further consideration of these areas is part of ongoing work – specifically that of the Episcopal Reference Group (ERG) on doctrine. This includes reflection on the *text* of the PLF and the *context* in which they might be used or enacted, particularly in bespoke services (what have previously been termed standalone services). This work is yet to be completed and is required for the House of Bishops to formally consider further commendation of the PLF material (including the notes and rubrics) for use under the discretion allowed under Canon B 5.

2.6. Significant progress has been made on the guidance and registration process for use of the PLF alongside a potential Code of Practice for Pastoral Reassurance based on Delegated Episcopal Ministry. However, as indicated above, this work still needs to be aligned with work expected from the ERG, and decisions dependant on this. This work will also offer the House of Bishops further theological resources to inform decision on a timetable for consideration of removing restrictions on clergy in same sex marriage.² Discussions in the Working Groups noted that any proposal brought to General Synod would need to have further clarity on this question. This clarity is needed not only for an understanding of what timeline might be set, but also to make clear what the proposals for PR intend to cover for the period of discernment.

2.7. Despite sometimes significant differences in theological and practical perspectives between Working Group members on the introduction of the PLF and the requirements for PR, there is commonality in seeking to better understand varied positions and maintain good relationships. It is therefore crucial that any proposal for the PLF alongside PR is backed with collective action to combat homophobia and homophobic bullying. Accompanying work is needed to establish how such action can be collectively taken across different theological perspectives. It is paramount that such work is significantly owned and shaped by direct engagement with LGBTQI+ individuals and Groups. Future iterations of this proposal should include a refreshed set of resources within the LLF Learning Hub, and any further resources developed to support conversations to discern use of the PLF or PR in local contexts. Further detail on this work will be included in updated proposals.

2.8. The proposal outlined in the CoP and Guidance continues to be developed. This involves ongoing engagement with Working Groups following feedback from the January House of Bishops and the February General Synod. Diocesan Synods,

² This builds on previous work around ‘ecclesiology, unity and differentiation’, ‘episcopacy and conscience’, and the relationship between ‘Marriage, Holy Matrimony and Same Sex Marriage’ drawn on in the development of these proposals published in GS Misc 1406.

and other bodies³ will also be asked for comments and feedback. This is not a process of formal approval of the constituent elements of the proposal, but an opportunity to provide input on whether it is ‘workable’ as a way of navigating the differences that exist in the introduction of the PLF. This will further test and develop the draft proposals as they are taken forward for further consideration at the House of Bishops and the General Synod.

3. The Proposal: Specific comments and areas of ongoing debate

PLF Guidance and Registration Processes

- 3.1. The PLF Guidance has been updated to reflect the use of the PLF as commended resources under Canon B5, including the use of the PLF in Public Worship – whether this is in the context of a regular service or in a bespoke service. Some sections are more applicable to the context of bespoke services. These address where the occasioning of such services might add issues for consideration that would not arise in a regular service. However, any use of the PLF in public worship needs to be consistent with the guidance. The PLF Working Group has identified a registration process for opting in to the use of the PLF in bespoke services, with the recommendation that ministers and churches also provide feedback on their use in private prayer and regular services.
- 3.2. Additional guidance has been incorporated on discernment around requesting DEM. This guidance remains draft and will undergo further iterations in response to feedback. Formal approval of this guidance (alongside other elements of the proposal) is anticipated to be proposed at the House of Bishops in May 2025 prior to the full proposal coming to the General Synod in July 2025.
- 3.3. This work is being conducted within the stated understanding of offering the PLF Resource Section as a form of pastoral provision, that “the PLF do not seek to simulate marriage, or pretend that the Church has made a decision to extend marriage to same-sex couples and that making the PLF available for couples in

³ Consultation conversations are also planned with groups such as TEI Principles, The College of Archdeacons, Lay Ministry Advisory Group, Dioceses Commission and others.

an active sexual relationship does involve any departure from doctrine, it nevertheless does not involve a departure from doctrine “in any essential matter” ([see legal note GS2358](#)). However, some PLF WG members do not hold to this view. This has led to some aspects of the guidance remaining contested, notably:

- 3.3.1. Updating previous text: Substantive portions of the text are drawn from existing guidance approved in 2023. Some elements of this text have been updated. Other areas have been identified by the working groups as needing further attention. This will require further checking alongside existing teaching and guidance documents and future work – such as that which the Episcopal Reference Group is undertaking.
- 3.3.2. Disruption at local level: leading to need for guidance and resources on how to hold conversations. Not making a decision to use the PLF for the sake of pastoral unity, and stressing that PLF are opt-in, are both clear options in the current process. These decisions are further complicated in contexts such as Team ministries. The guidance has been updated to try and reflect these points. Further iterations are needed once feedback from Dioceses has been received.
- 3.3.3. Tension has not yet been resolved on guidance around so called ‘contextual aesthetics’ –how bespoke services should look and what advice might be given around this. This tension focusses on the finding a balance between services being points of meaningful celebration, but not in ways that “*simulate marriage, or pretend that the Church has made a decision to extend marriage*”. The approach taken has been to offer general rather than specific guidance on these issues, relying on the test of worship being ‘be reverent and seemly’. However, the Group has also considered specific areas of symbolic importance, such as rings. Some members maintained that these are not given any specific reference in the use of the PLF, whereas others disagreed and felt the guidance should be more prescriptive

on this issue. This is in part because some cultural attributions (such as dress) may not be universally applicable. These areas of guidance will be updated once theological reflection material from the ERG on the ‘contextual aesthetic’ or enhancement of bespoke services is available.

3.3.4. Similar to the above, there are also concerns around how the guidance might help ministers approach conversations with couples around their relationship or provide ongoing support. This is in particular related to criteria that “*making the PLF available for couples in an active sexual relationship does involve any departure from doctrine, it nevertheless does not involve a departure from doctrine “in any essential matter”*”. Sections of the guidance previously issued had included advice on whether same-sex couples could be encouraged to participate in marriage preparation courses. These sections have been removed as such advice does not pertain to the use of the PLF. Ministers are encouraged to use their pastoral judgement in determining how they best support individuals in their congregations and communities.

3.4. The structure of the guidance has been adjusted to recognise that holding sensitive conversations about issues relating to LLF are a foundation to good pastoral practice. Specific conversations about the use of the PLF and/or seeking DEM should follow. The guidance on the use of the PLF and on seeking DEM have a crucial difference in how an incumbent and PCC (or other formal governance Group) come to a decision. The decision to opt-in to the use of PLF lies in the gift and responsibility of the *incumbent* – the minister with the cure of souls. Use of the PLF, at the very least in public worship, should be discussed and steered by wider conversations and may be supported by a formal PCC resolution. In situations where a minister may wish to use the PLF, but a PCC would not wish to do so, the guidance counsels to de-escalate conflict before considering again questions about the use of PLF. The decision to request DEM is that of a *PCC*, following consultation with the wider worshipping community. In a context where a PCC does not wish to seek DEM, but an individual minister

feels that this is necessary for them, the Code of Practice for DEM makes provision for this in additional episcopal care being made available.

Pastoral Reassurance based on delegated episcopal ministry.

3.5. The Working Group developing Pastoral Reassurance has focussed on the development of a Code of Practice for Delegated Episcopal Ministry – in line with the July 2024 motion to look towards the delegation of some specific forms of episcopal ministry. This CoP is in a comprehensive form, covering the key areas in which DEM has been identified as being a helpful contributor to PR. As such, it represents what the operation of DEM could look like **IF** approved. However, for some members of the Working Group a significant ‘gap’ remains in the provision of PR based on DEM to that of Transferred Jurisdiction which some members of the Working Group identify as desirable for their constituencies. Members agree that the Code needs legislative basis for it to be enforceable by parishes in particular.

3.6. The current CoP suggests that a Regional College is “encouraged to consult with stakeholders in the region to appoint to ensure that any Bishop appointed to offer DEM is likely to command support etc’. This was seen by some as to weak a statement which would not ensure a balance of views. This is particularly important to avoid people (whether lay or ordained) ending up in silos, and to encourage connection and relationships between people of different convictions.

3.7. Within the draft Code itself there are several sections where members of the Working Group are not in full agreement, or where there are clear divergent opinions. These include the following:

3.7.1. Bishops providing DEM should ideally be current members on the College of Bishops: Some members have flagged a risk around power imbalance in how regional plans are drawn up. If a Regional College of Bishops are of one mind on LLF matters, a diversity of views cannot be guaranteed, which in

turn could negatively impact the Regional Plan. If there is little or no diversity of views within an existing College, suggestions of how to best address this varied, and included using retired/non-stipendiary Bishops and bringing in support from adjacent regions. In such contexts, an honorary assistant Bishop could join a Regional College for fixed period whilst longer term changes in the appointment of new suffragans and/or diocesan bishops provides a broader balance of views in a region. All these suggestions came with their own caveats, including accountability, cost and workload.

3.7.2. Discussions on a Regional College also touched on whether there was the possibility that the archbishops might also play a role if there was an impasse or disagreement over the appointment of a suffragan bishops – where this related to establishing or maintaining a balance of views within a region. This has not been incorporated in the code at this point but remains an open area of enquiry.

3.7.3. Role of the cathedral in the life of the diocese: Cathedrals can be seen as the centre of worship within a diocese. However, if members of a cathedral chapter do not have a mix of theological perspectives, this role of a cathedral could become contested, and some people might feel that a particular cathedral, whichever stance it is seen to be taken on the use of the PLF, is no longer the centre of worship for them. Alongside feedback from conversations in dioceses, views on the proposal from the College of Deans will also be helpful in shaping advice for cathedrals around the PLF and broader dynamics of their introduction.

3.7.4. Paying attention to power dynamics: Good relationships and open communication between Bishops and their clergy (and PCCs) should be seen as the norm. However, Bishop's Visitors were introduced in the CoP to counteract any potential power imbalance between incumbents, PCCs and Bishops. For instance, speaking first to a Bishops' Visitor might be a helpful

way to begin to engage in conversations without the perception of being ‘summoned’ to a potentially conflictual conversations with a diocesan Bishop. Some WG members felt that, as these Visitors would be appointed by the Bishop, the power imbalance would remain, and it would be hard to ensure the Visitor(s) had a different theological perspective to that of the Bishop that appointed them. Some dioceses have already begun to put in place networks of LLF chaplains who hold differing positions on the introduction of the PLF, but who are committed to fostering good conversations and relationships in the diocese. It is this type of skilled individuals who the Group have in mind as potentially filling such a Visitor role. An examination of best practice in these areas of support will help inform further guidance in this area.

3.7.5. Individual episcopal care: In contexts where a PCC is not minded to seek DEM, but the incumbent does feel the need for some further pastoral reassurance for their ministry, members agreed that the Code should include such provision. This has been termed as additional ‘Episcopal Care’ as it is seen as having a more formal footing than pastoral support. The Code has indicated some areas that this might include, which need further clarification. How this Episcopal Care should be shaped, and whether it should only extend to ordained ministers with the cure of souls, or more widely, was a point of debate and will need to be returned to.

3.7.6. The code identifies some issues that would need to be considered for DEM in contexts of BMOs and Chaplaincies. This is an initial assessment. Feedback has already been received on other contexts such as church plants that are not yet specifically mentioned and the varied circumstances for chaplaincies (i.e. Proprietary Chapels and Armed Forces Chaplaincies.) As such, these sections do require further input from those engaged in such contexts. This is also true of additional guidance in these areas.

- 3.7.7. Support for laity in governance roles: Some members felt there was a need to provide some form of pastoral support to laity in governance role where they disagree with the PCC they serve. This has been included in the Code, but its scope and scale need further input.
- 3.7.8. Resources and finances: Specific concerns were raised around the cost of diocesan services provided to parishes, including paying for clergy training, as well as paying stipends and providing housing. Some of these services dioceses are required to provide by law – for example safeguarding, faculty jurisdiction, the Diocesan Authority. There were also questions about how a Diocese might deal with restricted gifts when the Diocese does not consider this as legitimate giving, and on the withholding of resources in these circumstances. The sections in the Code that relate to these areas have not sought to address such detail. This will need to be the subject of conversation if such circumstances arise. However, feedback will be sought on whether these points could be expanded, or further guidance provided.
- 3.7.9. Equality Act: Initial drafts of the Code referred to the Equality Act (2010) as this has a bearing on issues of employment practice and public conduct. This was subsequently determined to be more appropriately placed in the guidance. It is worth noting here however that debate in this area has also identified that an affirmation of the integrity of differing theological positions – including how the PLF are to be considered as an opt in resources and do not undermine the theological integrity of those who do not see agree with their use – needs to be clearly conveyed elsewhere. Likely in guidance or the bishops' statement.

- 3.8. The development of this Code of Practice has prompted comment on theological work on episcopacy that would be helpful to consider both prior to its introduction and as part of ongoing discernment. In part the proposal for offering delegated episcopal ministry is based in a model which has both theological and legal precedence in the actual transfer of responsibility and the

exercising of episcopal ministry. However, there is recognition from initial work from the Faith and Order Commission and initial consultation with the standing commission on the Five Guiding Principles that there are key differences in provision of delegated episcopal ministry in the context of the PLF. Sufficient work should be undertaken on this to accompany the proposals taken forward for formal consideration. Alongside this, it would be helpful for specific questions on this topic to be identified for the theological work in the period of discernment.

3.9. The significance of regional plans is also a key factor in the implementation of this Code. Future iterations should come with a draft or exemplar version of a regional plan. This will be core to the consultation with dioceses and other bodies so that the future proposal can better take this into consideration. Feedback from diocese and direct engagement with regional Groups of Bishops will need to be sought to develop at least one draft regional plan to accompany the July proposal. This will also need to take account of the additional challenges that the Church faces at this time, and the impact this may have on the workability of any proposal. Not finding meaningful mechanism for navigating differences around LLF and the PLF will also have a notable impact.

Bishops' Statement

3.10. The Bishops' Statement Working Group has met through the autumn and after considerable discussion, three possible versions of a Statement were considered. However, at their most recent meeting, members of the Bishops' Statement Group felt it unwise to share a draft Bishops' Statement at this particular point in time as consideration of its form and content is still ongoing. In addition, there was a recognition that the January meetings are the first in person meetings of both the House and College, post the publication of the Makin Review, and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. As such the focus at these meetings will understandably be on these topics. Instead, it was decided to share an update with the House and College of Bishops to reflect on the other key draft documents (CoP and PLF PG) which will in turn feed through to further iterations of a Bishops' Statement. Additionally, it was felt that ERG's

work on both the doctrine of marriage and advice on questions for consideration on clergy in same sex marriage needed to be available in order to properly inform a Bishops' Statement to introduce and undergird the proposal.

3.11. For reference, it may be helpful to note that the current draft includes the following broad areas, which are likely to be needed in such a statement:

- Opening statement outlining the shared desire among Bishops to share the gospel of Christ Jesus with our nation.
- Identifying the significant differences felt on the PLF which require finding ways to carry out God's mission together in light of the enduring lines of difference between our views on human sexuality.
- Identifying a framework for which outlines key ecclesiological principles affirming a shared Anglican identity, alongside the challenges or impairments.
- Specific commitments to seek the highest possible degree of communion within one Church. These commitments are first to society and the wider church, second to lay and ordained ministers and thirdly to fellow Bishops.

Vocations and Ministry Guidance

3.12. Work has begun on a separate set of guidance for vocations and ministry.

This will include further advice on how the introduction of DEM might affect those considering or in discernment processes and training. However, this guidance will also address areas of guidance that are necessary to modify the use of *Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991), which is a teaching document, as procedural guidance. This work is preliminary as this work will be dependent on the theological resources currently being written by the ERG and any subsequent decisions on a timetable for the consideration on restrictions for clergy in same sex marriage. In addition, broader work is also underway around a possible reiteration of the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy. This, alongside legislative work on the Clergy Conduct Measure, will require this piece of guidance to be integrated with this wider such. As such, it is

likely that vocation and ministry guidance for LLF might need to be drawn as interim whilst this wider work is developed. In keeping with the general comments on alignment in 2.6 more detailed vocations and ministry guidance, and in particular advice to current and potential ordinands, will be required to give clarity to the overall proposal and fulfil the intention of the documentation around the proposal 'being taken together as a replacement for Issues'.

Annex A – Glossary

Code of Practice (CoP)

Delegated Episcopal Ministry (DEM)

Episcopal Reference Group (ERG)

Independent Review Panel (IRP)

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

Pastoral Reassurance (PR)

Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF)

Annex B - 2024/25 LLF Working Groups – Tasks and Terms of Reference

Four Working Groups are envisaged.

- PLF – **Guidance for registration and use** inc. arrangements for Standalone Services
- Pastoral Reassurance – **Code of Practice**
- **Bishops Statement** Drafting Group
- **Ministry and Vocations Guidance** – Interim guidance to parallel doctrinal development and clergy SSM timetable

Each Group will need to be aware of the work that is happening in parallel but should avoid replicating this work. The Working Group chairs will meet regularly throughout the process to consider the dependencies and direct the work of their Groups accordingly.

Stakeholder engagement will continue alongside Working Groups. This may provide new information that the Working Groups would need to consider. This will be monitored by the Programme Board and reported to Working Groups through their Chairs.

Given the need for integration between workstreams in addition to joint working at the Leicester weekend (14-16th Nov). Two additional ‘combined Working Group’ meetings will be schedule. **The first on 29th Oct** (to discuss feedback from the 22nd/23rd Oct House of Bishops) **and the second on 11th Dec** (to discuss feedback from the 10th Dec House of Bishops).

General TOR

Responsibilities

LLF Working Groups are advisory bodies drawing on a range of perspectives to provide draft documentation for consideration by the House of Bishops, to support them in determining the next steps in the implementation of LLF.

The Programme Board will compile and report the recommendations from the LLF Working Groups to the House and College of Bishops. They will not make any decisions themselves but will have responsibility for working with the members of the LLF Working Groups to present the Bishops with clear, concise and integrated proposals to enable the House of Bishops to make key decisions.

Parameters

The parameters for the tasks of each Working Group have been set to reflect the tasks required from motions previously passed by the House of Bishops and the General Synod.

Papers going to the House of Bishops that include Working Group outputs will be shared in strict confidence. Feedback on issues raised and suggested revisions will follow any formal discussion of drafts in meetings of the House of Bishops.

Outputs

Each Group has the specific task of providing documentation for an integrated approach to the implementation of the PLF, and associated guidance and measures for Pastoral Reassurance.

Each Group will produce a commentary paper to include the rationale for certain sections, views on receptivity, and comments on divergent views that have not been resolvable through the drafting process. Commentary documents will be included as annexes to the proposals.

Timeline

- By Oct 14th, 2024: initial drafts/scoping document for Bishops' Statement and the Code of Practice for Episcopal Ministry
- By Nov 29th, 2024: revised drafts of Bishops' Statement and the Code of Practice for Episcopal Ministry; PLF Process and draft public facing materials and guidance.
- By Jan 10th, 2025: draft versions of Bishops' Statement and the Code of Practice for Episcopal Ministry; draft PLF Process and public facing materials and guidance for inclusion in update to the General Synod.
- By Jun 13th, 2025: revised versions of Bishops' Statement and the Code of Practice for Episcopal Ministry following diocesan feedback; final PLF Process and public facing materials and guidance for inclusion in update to the General Synod.

Support

Each Group will be staffed by a lead officer and be supported with theological, liturgical, legal and other advice as required.

PLF Registration and Guidance for the use of PLF in Standalone services

This Group will consider a process for registration for standalone services of PLF. This process should be incorporated in principle within the guidance, along with clarifications around the use of the PLF in non-scheduled (standalone) services. This guidance should continue to seek to balance the sensitivities of how these services offer appropriate pastoral provision response. The guidance is predicated on the PLF being available for use by clergy and lay ministers as commended material that can be used within services with authorized liturgy.

The Group should also undertake an impact assessment of how this process could be implemented and the types of resources and support that dioceses would require to facilitate this. The Group should consider the scope and mechanism for evaluation and learning from the use of the PLF over the next three years. The Group should work on the assumption that Pastoral Reassurance will be provided for those who wish to use the PLF and those who do not.

The tasks of this Group are to:

- Develop a process for registration and evaluation of the PLF in Standalone Services
- Identify key elements of an accompanying process for requesting and monitoring experience of Pastoral Reassurance.

- Revise and redraft Pastoral Guidance (1&2) for the use of the PLF under these arrangements.
- Advise on the impact and resources needed to support this implementation and how learning might be gathered and disseminated to enhance practice.

Pastoral Reassurance

This Group will consider the detail for proportionate Pastoral Reassurance through a model of Delegated Episcopal Ministry based on a Code of Practice. They will need to navigate the parameters of how ‘some specific Delegated Episcopal Ministry’ might facilitate the core aspects of reassurance required in the areas of:

- *Enabling spaces where the approach to doctrine is shared with others.*
- *‘Episcopal oversight’ which is [legally] secure and is able in particular to cover and make authoritative decisions about:*
 - *Ministry/ appointments – for example writing commendations, appointing clergy to parishes, issuing licenses.*
 - *Pipelines/ vocations - provision which enables different integrities to have secure access and encouragement to pathways to lay ministry, ordination, senior office etc.*
 - *Church planting - the ability for church planting to take place wholly led by in of the three spaces as well as potentially in partnership between them. This should also help to address concerns over*
- *legal security – e.g. protection of clergy in Same-Sex Civil Marriage (SSM) from legal action for not conforming to doctrine or equally protection from teaching Anglican traditional doctrine being construed as prejudice in law.*

This work will need to recognise that differences remain between stakeholders in the approach of Delegated Episcopal Ministry as a basis for Pastoral Reassurance.

Similarly, the conceptual framework of three spaces is not one that is able to be foregrounded in the outline of provision. However, this does still appear to be a helpful ‘reality check’ on the constituencies who need to be considered in any reassurance. As GS 2358 states “the language of three spaces sought to acknowledge that responses to LLF appear to be emerging in roughly three ways: broad agreement; strong disagreement; and many congregations or individuals for whom there is a mixture of the two, or who do not want to make a decision on this at this time. Therefore, an expectation would be that in discussing the practical areas for reassurance the ‘on the ground reality’ of will be taken into account.

This Group will also need to navigate how such provision might map onto two possible outcomes, depending on the ERG work around the development of doctrine and how this might inform a timetable for further discussions and decisions on removing restrictions to enable clergy to enter into SSM. The starting point for the work is then current provision of the PLF (to include option of use in standalone services). However, it will be necessary for the Group to identify how any further decisions on clergy in SSM might affect the proportionality of provision.

The tasks of this Group are to:

- Draft a Code of Practice proportionate for use of the PLF as a pastoral accommodation, including potential adjustments to accommodate a Code of Practice proportionate for use with PLF over the three year period of discernment.
- Identify where this CoP would need additional attention if the House of Bishops were to set a 3–5-year timetable for the consideration of clergy entering into SSM and the necessary processes required to enable this.

Consultative Group for Bishops' Statement

This Group will draft the text of a Bishops' Statement, which will provide the overarching narrative for the proposal for the period of discernment around the use of the PLF, how differences over development of doctrine can be navigated, what informs and sustains our unity, and what the Bishops are committing to providing in terms Pastoral Reassurance to support this. The text should highlight what we hold in common and the Anglican ecclesiological principles the settlement is founded upon. This document will need to be drafted in conjunction with the Code of Practice around Pastoral Reassurance so that the overarching principles cohere with the detail of provision.

The Group will consist of Bishops who are members of the LLF Programme Board alongside other episcopal colleagues. Early drafts of a statement will be distributed to all members of Working Groups for comments and suggestions.

Given ongoing challenges over areas of significant disagreement the Bishops' Statement Group will also meet directly with the principle leaders in key Stakeholder Groups to discuss the overarching remit of the current proposal (which the Bishops' Statement will outline) and the positions held by these Groups and their wider constituencies. These conversations will help to inform the drafting of the Statement and identify further issues that might need to be raised in accompanying commentary.

The tasks of this Group are to:

- Draft a Bishops' Statement articulating the overarching rationale and framework of a settlement around current and future practice for implementing the objectives of LLF.
- Outline wider issues for consideration by the House of Bishops in the accompanying commentary.
- Ensure this statement aligns with the detail within the Code of Practice for Pastoral Reassurance.

Vocations and Ministry Guidance

This Group will draft interim Vocations and Ministry Guidance (some of which was previously consider as Part 3 of the PLF Pastoral Guidance).

Given that decisions on any timetable for removing restrictions on clergy entering same-sex civil marriages has not yet been determined. This Group will need to be responsive to future decisions that the House of Bishops might take in this area.

The FAOC ERG work that is providing additional theological input on doctrinal considerations is due to report to the House of Bishops in two stages. A draft/outline report coming for the Dec 10th meeting and a full report for January 20th meeting.

As such this Group's work is likely to be primarily one of scoping potential issues and areas until some point in 2025 when greater clarity on the parameters and needs for this guidance would be set.

In order to progress this work, it is reasonable for the Group to begin its scoping work on the assumption that any work to formally remove restrictions on clergy entering into same-sex marriages would likely require a longer period of work and as such the guidance that will be needed is interim guidance that would be to be required to be operative for several years.

The Group will also need to take account of developments in the Pastoral Reassurance work as this may also provide the mechanism for some forms of differentiated processes for vocations, ordinations, licensing etc. within nationally agreed guidance.

It should be noted that members of the Group may not be in full agreement with some of the determinations that may need to be made. If helpful these can be noted and expanded on in the commentary document

The tasks of this Group are to:

- Develop interim Vocations and Ministry Guidance in accordance with any timetable set for wider changes around removing restrictions on clergy entering into same sex marriage.
- Advise on what further guidance would be necessary based on full removal of restrictions and what teaching documents and resources might be useful in this regard.
- Align interim guidance with any proposed mechanisms for differentiated processes for vocations, ordinations, licensing etc. in the PR Code of Practice.