

## From the wider Church

### **Living in Love and Faith: an update in light of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The House of Bishops has agreed that, in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the publication of the Living in Love and Faith resources, which had been scheduled to take place in June, should be postponed.

In a statement, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, together with the Bishops of Coventry and London, emphasise that work on the Living in Love and Faith resources continues and that the situation will be monitored to discern the most appropriate time for their publication.

The Archbishops and Bishops also reiterate that the publication of the resources will initiate a process of whole-church engagement within a clear timeframe, to enable the Church to discern and decide about the way forward for the Church of England in relation to questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

They said:

"In recent weeks and months, almost every aspect of our lives – and the life of the whole Church – has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Inevitably, that has prompted some serious thought about our plans for the publication of the Living in Love and Faith resources and what we envisaged might come next: a process of church-wide engagement and episcopal discernment and decision making about the way forward for the Church in relation to questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

"The LLF resources were due to be published at the end of June 2020. However, the Church's focus is now on ministering to people who are experiencing so many challenges – of bereavement, sickness, isolation, uncertainty about livelihood and fear for what the future holds. That is why we have decided to delay the publication of the resources. We know that there may be real disappointment about this delay, especially for LGBTI+ people, and we are grateful for the continued engagement of so many in the LLF process.

"It is important to say, however, that while the publication date has been delayed, Living in Love and Faith has not simply been parked. Far from it: a huge amount of work and prayerful engagement has gone into the resources and we are more hopeful than ever that they will enable the people of God to learn together about human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage in the context of our life together in love and faith.

"No one can predict how COVID-19 will affect the life of the Church or society over the coming months and years. That is why we will monitor the situation to discern when might be the earliest appropriate time to publish the long-awaited LLF resources and thereby launch the process of whole-church engagement.

"The production of the resources continues to be in hand under the leadership of the Bishop of Coventry. We hope that, when the time is right, they will serve the life of the Church. It is likely that the resources will seek to reflect and give due attention to the context in which they will eventually be launched.

"As well as the resources themselves we have also been giving prayerful thought to what would come next following their publication. The House of Bishops has agreed that, when that time comes, there will be a process of engagement right across the Church. This will take place within a clear timeframe under the leadership of the Bishop of London and will enable the Church to discern

and decide about the way forward for the Church in relation to questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

"We will say more on how that might be shaped when our current situation becomes clearer. The Archbishop of York Designate, who will be in post when the resources are published and disseminated, has been consulted about these plans.

"The vision continues to be one of enabling the whole Church to explore the resources together and so to contribute to the Church's discernment about these matters that affect deeply our life together in love and faith."

*The Archbishop of Canterbury*

*The Archbishop of York*

*The Bishop of Coventry*

*The Bishop of London*