



The Parish Church of St Andrew

Harlestone with Harlestone Manor

Rector | *The Reverend Andrea Watkins*

Curate | *The Reverend Rachel Kurkinen*

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Our mission is the making and sustaining of Christians

POSITION STATEMENT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

in relation to the General Synod's House of Bishops' Working Group on
Relationships, Sexuality & Gender

Following the Church of England's inability to reach agreement on, and to terminate, the 2017 'Living in Love & Faith' (LLF) process which might have progressed from the agreed Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) introduced in 2023, the Parochial Church Council met on 31 January 2026 to discuss the situation. The PCC wished to attempt to understand the process and journey with a view to indicating to the incumbent the position we commend to her as the discussions continue and in her discussions and deliberations in the future, wherever they occur.

This position statement was later formally agreed by the PCC at its meeting on 25 February 2026.

- I. The PCC echoes the Archbishop of York's commendation to Synod that it 'recognises and laments the distress and pain many have suffered during the LLF process, especially LGBTAI+ people.'
- II. The PCC is of the view that PLF are best perceived as what was described as 'crumbs under the table' and are inadequate as they only allow for certain worded prayers during a scheduled service. That said, there was no appetite for services to be manipulated to allow bespoke services badged as normal church services, not because the PCC disagrees with the concept, but because of the conflict this would create for the clergy in their allegiance to the Bishop and formularies of the Church of England set out in Canon Law

- III. Despite concerns around the extent of PLF described above, the PCC supports the incumbent in making pastoral provision for use of PLF if so requested by a couple. It is, after all, for the time being, the only pastoral response available and St Andrew's should be place which welcomes this.
- IV. At the same time, the PCC does not feel able to support wedding services for same-sex couples, based on the concept and understanding and understanding of the Church's teachings on marriage, and given that such services would be a step too far for many and the contention created would delay progress beyond the current generation. Further delays are harmful.
- V. The PCC agrees unanimously that PLF is insufficient and appears cruel for those in a same-sex relationship not to be offered any facility for their civil marriage to be blessed in church, at the discretion of the incumbent, in a similar way to which heterosexual couples can come to church for a Blessing Service. Should Canon Law be changed, or concensus agreed by the Bishops to allow such stand-alone bespoke services, this PCC would seek to continue to be a welcoming parish and for the incumbent and her curates and successors to be encouraged to offer such a welcome.
- VI. In prayerful and harmonious discussion, in learning and listening, the PCC was deeply troubled to more fully understand the journey of PLF and LLF, and the pain caused to all, especially the pain and hurt caused in the process and result and, in so far as it has any influence, would wish our position and concerns to be brought to the attention at Deanery, Diocesan or General Synod level in any relevant discussions
- VII. The PCC's starting and ending position is that 'God is love' and we are formed in God's image, with all our differences and hues, being reminded in the meeting that 'love trumps all', to quote verbatim a comment made in our discussions.

As this debate continues (and continue it must), a PCC member summed up their views, with which this agreed position statement is concluded: *We know from L P Hartley's 'go between' that the past is a different country – they do things differently there. By the same token, the future is a different country – they do things differently there. Notwithstanding the different cultures among the Anglican worldwide Communion, she had better find institutional structures which allow her to honour and - not uncritically – respect this very deep and significant fact among many of the people she serves, and aspires to serve. And fast*