

Why pride flags are important.

Simply put: the world is not a safe place for LGBTQ+ people, and pride flags symbolise safety.



Consider the reality that LGBTQ+ people face:

In the year ending March 2024, there were 22,839 sexual orientation hate crimes recorded in England and Wales. Additionally, there were 4,732 hate crimes recorded against transgender people in the same period

The Pride flag is needed to demonstrate allyship, create safe spaces, and foster a sense of community and belonging for LGBTQ+ individuals, especially in the face of ongoing discrimination and challenges. It serves as a visible symbol of support and acceptance, and its presence can encourage LGBTQ+ individuals to feel safer and more comfortable being themselves.

Here's why flying the Pride flag remains important:

Visibility and Allyship:

The flag acts as a visible sign that LGBTQ+ individuals and their allies are present and accepted in our community.

Safe Spaces:

For LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those who may be questioning their identity or facing isolation, the flag can signal that our church is a safe and welcoming environment.

Community Building:

It fosters a sense of belonging and connection among LGBTQ+ individuals and allies, reminding them they are not alone.

Raising Awareness:

The flag can spark conversations and raise awareness about LGBTQ+ issues and the ongoing need for equality and acceptance.

Symbol of Progress:

While progress has been made, the flag also serves as a reminder that the fight for LGBTQ+ rights is not over and that there is still work to be done.

The flag's presence is a powerful message of support, particularly for those who may be struggling with their identity or facing discrimination. It's a symbol that can make a tangible difference in the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and contribute to a more inclusive and accepting world

Elements of the Church continue to discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community, and many perceive the Church as condemnatory and unsafe. The flag flying above a Church challenges that perception and says 'you are safe and welcome here'.

Like it or not and regardless of your personal experiences, many LGBTQ+ people encounter homophobia, transphobia and biphobia daily. As an LGBTQ+ person, you never know if you will face discrimination or violence just for existing. Visibility is needed to send a message to the vocal minority that their behaviour is not welcome.

But doesn't the Bible condemn LGBTQ+ people?

There are 6 passages in the Bible which refer to same-sex behaviour, three in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament.

Genesis 19 – in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah the same sex behaviour which is condemned is a threatened gang rape. There is nothing about consensual loving same-sex behaviour.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 – the Old Testament prohibits male same sex intercourse – but again not in the context of a loving same sex relationship. It also has 613 other rules and prohibitions including the eating of shellfish, rabbit and pork, the wearing of clothing made of mixed fibres (poly -cotton!) the charging of interest on loans and having sex with women during their menstrual period. These are all described as abominations. These prohibitions have their roots in an ancient culture which did not have the same level of understanding as we have today and, if we understand Jesus Christ as the end of the law (Romans 10:4) then none of these prohibitions are binding on Christians.

Romans 1: 26-27 Paul describes people who have turned away from God and includes same-sex behaviour as an indication of this. But the context is again important because in the ancient world, same-sex relationships were virtually all exploitative and lustful ie sex between masters and slaves, men and boys, or with prostitutes. Loving faithful same-sex relationships were not on the radar. And what Paul condemns is people who have no love and no fidelity. Paul also describes same-sex relations as 'unnatural' – but then uses the same word to describe men who have long hair. Unnatural because they violate patriarchal gender roles.

1 Corinthians 6:9 and Timothy 1:10

Same-sex faithful relationships or marriage and questions of gender identity were not a feature of the ancient world, so the Bible only ever talks about heterosexual marriage. It's a bit like saying the Bible condemns Tik-Tok or the internet because it doesn't encourage it. The Bible teaches that marriage is about reflecting God's self-giving love for humanity through the covenant we make and keep with our spouses. Same -sex couples can live out that vision of covenant keeping love just as well as heterosexual couples do.

Many of these passages are about power, exploitation and specific cult practices. Trying to apply them to modern, consensual love is like trying to use a map of ancient Rome to navigate modern London, It just doesn't work.