

What Anglican Church Vote on Gay Marriage and Archbishop's Call for 'Radical New Christian Inclusion' Really Means

Editor's Note: The Church of England's vote on gay marriage is making news around the world. To understand the British view, we invited London businessman Martin Clarke, a member of Holy Trinity Brompton Anglican Church in London, to opine with his usual wit and insight.

The rapidly-approaching 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his theses to the doors of All Saints Church calls to mind the way LGBTI nailed the House of Bishops' report to the Church of England Synod doors last night. It seems that with the support of Archbishop Justin Welby, they are also pushing at open doors, especially when Welby calls for "radical new Christian inclusion."

The bishops' report essentially sought consent to welcome and love everyone into the church community, but not to sanction gay marriage in line with the U.K. Parliament that legalized it in 2014. It was the clergy of the General Synod that thwarted the adoption of the report, voting 100 to 93 against. The U.K. clergy are those men and women ordained to run the churches on a daily basis and include people from the LGBTI communities.

For certain liberal members of the clergy, the report did not go the whole way by dropping its opposition to gay marriage. This decision was welcomed by the LGBTI as a "victory for love and equality." The bishops were largely (43 to 1) happy to

show love to the LGBTI community, but marriage equality was still a bridge too far for them. It is ironic that six of the bishops failed to turn up to vote in Parliament when gay marriage was legalized in 2014, which leaves one wondering where they all were when it mattered.

The Church of England that was founded 483 years ago was birthed out of divorce, led by the heterosexual pangs of King Henry. Those doors were flung open wide by divorce, still held as sin by the church, and today, other sexual issues seek to fling open the doors again into a new era.

As a divorced person, I was barred from being allowed to remarry in the Church of England and accepted their blessing instead. The gay community will not accept any blessing but wants equality. The simplest solution to the issue could lead to the church refusing to marry anyone and simply giving everyone the blessing. In the absence of that, there will be division and angst within the church, but it does prompt me to think of this Solomon-type wisdom solution.

The church is full of sinners seeking repentance from anything and everything, and if it opens its doors more widely to show real love and not fake platitudes, then, and only then, might we see truth and honesty. We need leadership now, not more fence-sitting and kicking the can down the road. The issue is not going away anytime soon.

Meantime, the gates of heaven, I understand, have not been widened, and the access path remains narrow. After all, Martin Luther ended up marrying a nun, though 500 years later, he could, of course, have chosen a priest. {eoa}