

Apostasy Rising: First Church of England Clergyman Marries Gay Partner

A Church of England clergyman has become the first to enter a same-sex marriage, going against official guidance, which says clergy need to “model the Church’s teaching in their lives.”

Canon Jeremy Pemberton and his partner, Laurence Cunnington, had the ceremony in a hotel on Saturday.

An evangelical group within the Church of England called for “clear discipline” on the issue, saying anything else would make the Church’s official position look hollow.

In February, the Church of England released guidance saying it would be unacceptable for an ordained person to have a same-sex wedding.

The Church also said it would not ordain someone in a same-sex marriage.

Rod Thomas, from the Reform church group, comments, “There’s no doubt that there is pressure within some parts of the Church for the Church to change its mind on sexuality.”

“If there is not clear discipline, then it is the equivalent to saying, ‘We really didn’t mean what we said.’ It will precipitate a crisis,” he says.

In light of his wedding, Canon Pemberton, a divorced father of five, says, “I love this man, and I want to be married to him. That’s what I want. It is the same as anyone who wants to get married.”

The archbishops of Canterbury and York underlined their stance on marriage in a letter published alongside the guidance.

They said that Church bishops “are all in agreement that the Christian understanding and doctrine of marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman remains unchanged.”

Last year the Church of England released a report that recommended that gay unions should be marked by special church services as an act of worship.

The Church claims that such services would not be “blessings” or part of liturgy.

Vicar and blogger Peter Ould comments, “The problem with the recommendations as they stand is that they give priests a *carte-blanche* to have public services affirming sexual relationships outside of marriage.”

He adds that the report “simply doesn’t know how to handle men and women like myself who, despite not being heterosexual, have made tough choices to fashion our lives in line with the biblical truth.”