

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

What is going on in the Church of England?



Dear Friends,

Last month the bishops in the Church of England agreed that gay clergy in civil partnerships can become Bishops as long as they are celibate! Two months ago the government said that gay people could get married but not in the Church of England and we are still not allowed to bless civil partnerships. Less than three months ago the Church of England General Synod voted against women bishops!

Isn't this confusing?

I must admit that I have been very disappointed by the way these decisions have been made and announced as they don't seem wholly thought through. We have all worked hard to present a welcoming and open image to the wider community and yet these decisions may well seem incomprehensible to them. The media have had a field day at the church's expense and it seems that the Church has shot itself in the foot!

At the same time, I feel pleased that the Church of England is at least talking about and engaging with these important issues, rather than sweeping them under the sanctuary carpet.

How do we go forward?

In the Acts of the Apostles the Early Church had difficult decisions to make and paths to tread. Jesus did not set up a church, so it was probably a tough decision for the "people of the way", those who followed the way of Jesus but continued to worship in the Temple to leave their Jewish roots and begin to worship in one another's houses. The other decision was whether they should stay in Jerusalem preaching and teaching or go further afield and then what about

keeping to Jewish laws and ritual of the Torah. St Peter may well have been the bridge builder between the two types of early Christianity, one led by St Paul who said that there should be freedom from the law and St James the Just who felt that followers of Jesus ought to keep the Jewish laws. Paul and James were identified with their own "brands" of Christianity. Peter wanted to hold onto his Jewish identity, in contrast with Paul, but he showed flexibility towards the desires of the broader Christian community, in contrast to James. (Galatians 2) so Peter became a unifying force in the church.

The Church of England itself had an unusual beginning, as although it was inspired by the Protestant Reformers, it came into being as a result of a power struggle between Henry VIII and the Pope!

For us today, the Anglican Via Media with its emphasis on reason, tolerance and the value of tradition can help us to see these issues in their wider perspective of the history of the Church. And from the earliest days of the faith, St Peter's example can be an inspiration to us to work within the Church to build bridges and to continue to share the good news of God's love.

Love, Jo



...I have reason to believe sir may be carrying illegally acquired lead from a church roof...