

Dear Mr Nye

22 May 2018

We are writing as the elected leadership of the Evangelical Group on General Synod further to your letter of 18 October 2017 to Canon Jordan Hylden of The Episcopal Church and the recent public response to it, particularly here in the Church of England.

We recognise that there is a variety of convictions within the Church of England (and the Communion as a whole) regarding the nature of marriage and the teaching of scripture with respect to issues of human sexuality. We therefore thank God for those who are helping to remind us of the teaching that has been passed down over the centuries and we believe to be securely rooted in the scriptures and in particular in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We note that your comments to Canon Hylden were based on limited consultation, given the short time span afforded to you. Nonetheless, we are grateful for the way in which your letter drew attention to a number of important matters.

We do not share the concern expressed by some in response to your letter. To the contrary, we wish to extend our thanks for your willingness to offer us all (including The Episcopal Church) a reminder of the apostolic teaching of the Church regarding human sexuality, and the rightful location of sexual intimacy within the marriage of a man and woman. However much some might wish to change the Church's theology of marriage and/or ethical premises, we believe that the historic witness of scripture in these matters has not been misunderstood in 2000 years of the Church's teaching.

We are grateful for your acknowledgement of the way in which the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 has broken with the inherited understanding of marriage across many cultures and over many centuries. While there are some who feel this break is long overdue, we do not share this opinion: rather we believe such a change to be divergent from scripture and at odds with the common good.

We note your concern regarding the removal of reference to the procreation of children from the 'Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2' as one of the three purposes for which marriage was ordained by God, as set out in the Book of Common Prayer (1662). While it is widely agreed that a marriage is not to be valued only by the procreation of children, this potential in a marriage remains central to the purposes for which it was given and can only be realised where marriage is between a man and a woman.

Your reflections on the way in which The Episcopal Church has taken steps to pursue its convictions appear to us to be honest, open and reasonable. We therefore do not accept the negative way in which some have described your letter, or that its content represents unhelpful 'signals from the centre'.

Please be assured of our prayers for yourself, for Archbishops Justin and Sentamu and for all those who seek to lead the Church of England at this time.

Yours in His service