

Q and A about the declaration

Why this sudden knee-jerk reaction?

This response is neither sudden nor knee-jerk. The recent experience of other churches in the Anglican Communion and beyond shows that many Christians will resist moves away from historic Christian teaching. Many evangelicals and catholics in the Church of England have been indicating for some time that they did not accept it as inevitable that the *Living in Love and Faith* process should culminate in proposals for change in the doctrinal, liturgical, and ethical position of the Church of England. Our response to what took place in Synod should come as no surprise.

Is this not just a power grab?

Some have suggested that resistance is a cloak for a relatively small number of rich and wealthy conservative evangelical churches to attempt to lever themselves into a position of power by using their position and financial muscle to coerce the Church of England into complying with their beliefs. While there are churches among those compelled to resist which are relatively self-sufficient, the breadth and number of churches responding in this way bears witness to our concern that the Church of England should remain faithful to the historic faith as we have received it. That is our motivation and it is with sadness that we have concluded that the College and House of Bishops risk leading us down a heterodox path and that they appear to have greatly underestimated the number and diversity of us who are dismayed by the direction of travel which has been signalled.

Is this an attempt to make the Church of England monochromely evangelical?

We rejoice that the Church of England is a reformed catholic church, serving the whole of England in evangelism, mission, and pastoral care. We wish to share with all faithful Anglicans in working for the re-evangelisation of our country for which we hope and pray.

Can we not simply “walk together” and accept “prayers that bear a nuanced variety of understandings”?

The prayers are based on contested legal advice and theological ambiguity and do not provide an adequate basis for the unity of the Church. This would be the first occasion in the history of modern liturgical revision (post 1928) that prayers have been authorised or commended which cannot in conscience be prayed in common with the whole Church of England. The criterion for liturgical revision under the provisions of Canon B2 up till now has been that all such prayers have been pray-able by the whole Church. This is true of commended material as well as that which has gone through the full liturgical revision process in Synod. The attempt to swerve this by using the provisions of Canon B5 merely places the onus on the officiating minister to defend the use of these prayers against the accusation that they do not fit the criterion of Canon B5 that they are “neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter” – which is, of course, contested. If *lex orandi, lex credendi* is still the position of the CofE, it is unfeasible that these prayers can be commended as not in conflict with the doctrine of the CofE.

But isn’t the doctrine of the Church of England remaining unchanged?

This should be the case given what the bishops have said and the amendment passed by General Synod. We believe, however, that the actions we set out in the declaration are contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England. That is why they have in the past always been rejected by the bishops even when they

have sought to allow maximal freedom within the current doctrine of the church. Our doctrinal concern has been spelt out on many occasions, and if you wish to understand it further there are clear explanations by [Lee Gatiss from Church Society](#), a [paper from CEEC](#), [an exploration by Andrew Goddard](#) of the muddle into which the Bishops have plunged us in their attempts to claim they are upholding the doctrine of marriage, and critiques of the legal advice in [GS Misc 1339](#) from [Martin Davie](#) and from [a number of lawyers](#). It does not follow that simply because Canon B30 "Of Holy Matrimony" remains (at present) unchanged, no doctrinal change is taking place. When we are invited to acquiesce in any of the four developments set out in the declaration, we believe we are being asked to approve the Church of England making provision to bless and commend that which we do not believe its formularies permit us to bless and commend. That is why we are compelled to resist.

What do you want?

We would still urge the House of Bishops even at this late stage to draw back, heed the cautions and advice spelt out by the Bishop of Coventry (who chaired the LLF process) in his [important recent article](#), and respond to our substantial critiques in order to prevent further tearing, perhaps irreparably, the fabric of the Anglican Communion and replicating its sad divisions within the Church of England.