



## All Hallows' Church Leeds

### Response to the Bishops' 'Pastoral Statement'

*Friday 31 January 2020*

The House of Bishops of the Church of England recently released a ['pastoral statement' on civil partnerships](#) which has received considerable attention in the press, and has caused controversy in the church and beyond. We acknowledge that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York since then have [apologised for releasing this statement](#), but they have not retracted any of its content.

The statement has caused a lot of anger and pain among many church members and other Christians. This particularly applies to those whose relationships, in which they express and experience intimacy, love and grace, the statement declares to be 'falling short of God's purposes for human beings'.

At All Hallows Church, we would like to affirm our understanding of being a Christian community:

We are trying to respond to the challenge of Jesus of Nazareth to love God, ourselves and others, exploring the meaning of God's love for all people — women, men, black, white, gay, straight, older, younger, of faith or no faith — and looking to meet the needs of people who feel damaged or marginalised. With others in the area, we work for justice, reconciliation and to inspire hope. Desmond Tutu's phrase 'the rainbow people of God' underlies our use of the rainbow symbol — coming from a variety of backgrounds, ages and lifestyles, we celebrate and affirm our God-given diversity.

To our regret, because of the Church of England's official policy, at All Hallows we are not legally permitted to conduct civil partnerships or same-sex weddings.

However, before being Anglican, we are called to be Christian. And to be Christian means to believe in God who bestows divine blessing on people who live together in love and unity (Psalm 133). Hence, we do celebrate this blessing with members of our community, regardless of the legal form of their relationship. Our congregation includes people in a wide variety of relationships, and we are grateful for the diverse ways in which they witness to God's love.

We pray for a time when the church will acknowledge and embrace the diversity of God's creation and the radical and inclusive nature of God's love. We hope that the Church of England's [Living in Love and Faith project](#) will produce resources that will help the church to engage with questions about human identity, relationships, marriage and sexuality in an open and affirming way.

The process of change in the Church of England is slow. At All Hallows we advocate for and work for that change, and in the meantime we provide a welcoming space to all the rainbow people of God.