



31st January 2020

Dear Friends,

I have spent the last two days with the College of Bishops. Sadly, Bishop Lee was not with us, and his presence was much missed. Bishop Lee sent me a message offering prayers for the bishops, for 'deep wisdom, discernment and shared humility before God'. Our meeting was indeed humbling as we faced the depth of our individual and institutional failure.

As a pastor, I hold to both the tradition of the teaching of the church and to the reality of my experience that most of us live lives which are not so tidy. Our church has, in recent years, used liturgical language which is congruent with that lived experience. The language of the prefaces and prayers of the Common Worship marriage service has that sensitivity to the complexity of our relationships, whilst speaking of the gift that marriage offers in grace, unity and loyalty. The legalism of the pastoral statement released last week was not gracious, and has got in the way of people's relationship with Jesus. As your Bishop, I am ashamed of my betrayal of my Lord and endorse the statement from the Archbishops below.

As the Archbishops' statement released yesterday indicates, Bishops have also been engaging, openly and honestly, with issues around sexuality and identity, including the possibility of a change in the church's teaching on marriage. The Living in Love and Faith resources will be published later in the year. I intend to enable conversations across the whole Diocese in the autumn, and will want to listen carefully to your responses. I do not anticipate we will all agree on a way forward, but as I write this on the day we leave the European Union, I know there is an imperative to meet with each other and to find courage to talk about our differences. As I said on my first day in the Diocese of Bristol, I am called to be a Bishop for everyone, in the name of Jesus who seeks to draw all people to himself. Please pray for me in that role, and for healing for Bishop Lee's leg!

Yours, in companionship with our crucified, risen and ascended Christ,

Statement from Archbishop Justin and Archbishop Sentamu following the College of Bishops Meeting – 30th January 2020

We as Archbishops, alongside the bishops of the Church of England, apologise and take responsibility for releasing a statement last week which we acknowledge has jeopardised trust. We are very sorry and recognise the division and hurt this has caused.

At our meeting of the College of Bishops of the Church of England this week we continued our commitment to the Living in Love and Faith project which is about questions of human identity, sexuality and marriage. This process is intended to help us all to build bridges that will enable the difficult conversations that are necessary as, together, we discern the way forward for the Church of England.