



The Diocese of  
**Southwark**

**The Bishop of Southwark**

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## A Pastoral Letter to the Diocese from the Bishop of Southwark

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ

Many of you will have followed the debate in and around General Synod relating to Marriage and Same Sex Relationships. As you know, Synod decided **not** to 'take note' of the Bishops' Report. It is unlikely that further proposals will return in the life of this Synod.

You may wish to know that I abstained from voting. This was not in order to distance myself from the House of Bishops. People spoke with passion in the course of the debate across a wide spectrum and it was in the light of what I heard that I made my decision recognising a continuing need to listen attentively to each other in the love of Christ. You need to know of my desire to maintain my God-given ministry of unity as your bishop.

Two Shared Conversations have already taken place in Southwark, following the National Regional Conversations. People have grown in confidence and trust in voicing very different convictions. I believe that we have taken a positive approach towards the good disagreement that the Archbishop of Canterbury has commended. I am meeting with participants from the Shared Conversations at the beginning of March to reflect on what has been of value and to consider carefully what to commend more widely to the Diocese. I will also be calling a meeting with those from the Diocese on General Synod as recommend in the Archbishops' Letter (attached).

I do not anticipate a formal change in the doctrine relating to marriage. But I believe there is scope for us to be braver and bolder in generous love and forbearance. Whatever shape a pastoral accommodation should in due season take, I steadfastly believe that, by God's grace, we should proceed with a prayerful unity of purpose and integrity. The key, as so often, will be to speak well of one another and to listen well.

In music, harmony is not achieved when all play their own notes but only when all engage in sensitive and acute listening. It is to this listening that I believe we are now called. This is generous, humble listening, that makes the voice of the other have more weight than one's own voice.

As the Scripture says, 'we do not lose heart' ..... 'And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.' (Romans 5. 3-5)

Please be assured of my prayers, as I am of yours for which I am deeply grateful.

ENC: Letter from the Archbishops