**Explanatory Memorandum**

In September 2018, the Governing Body indicated by informal poll their agreement with the Bench that “it is pastorally unsustainable for the Church to make no formal provision for those in same-gender relationships”. Since then, the bishops have been deliberating what the next steps might be, and what sort of formal provision should be offered to Governing Body for their consideration. In presenting this bill to approve a Rite of the Blessing of Same-sex Unions, the Bench of Bishops is responding to the 2018 motion, which was passed by over a two thirds majority in the Governing Body.

The Christian tradition from the early centuries received the union of one man and one woman for life as the normative and exclusive context for sexual intimacy, and received the Scriptures as enjoining this ideal, despite the fact that different patterns of polygamy are witnessed, and even seem to have tacit approval, in the pages of the Bible.

As with many aspects of human life, however, experience of human relations is rarely as straightforward as the traditional view of the ideal, and Scripture itself bears witness to a process of accommodation in relation, for example, to divorce, while differing levels of tolerance have been shown by the Christian Church down through the centuries to sexual activity in the context of betrothal and so-called “common law marriages”. In the same way, patterns of sexual expression which seem accepted in Scripture without condemnation, such as sexual intercourse between a master and slave, or between a man and a concubine, are clearly now regarded as repugnant.

In the view of the bench, the Scriptures condemn “porneia”, unbridled lust, in which sexual activity is divorced from faithful and mutual commitment. It is true that in Scripture such faithful commitment is always portrayed as between a man and woman in covenanted union (marriage), and all other sexual activity, including references to same-sex activity, is portrayed as an expression of porneia. However, with new social, scientific and psychological understandings of sexuality in the last one and a half centuries, we believe that same-sex relationships can be understood in a radically different way, and that the teaching of Scripture should therefore be re-interrogated.

Same-sex friendships – although without any clear implication of sexual activity – are celebrated in the Bible. If Scripture is correctly read as condemning porneia, then the question can be asked whether loving and faithful long term same-sex commitments are properly categorised as the expression of “unbridled lust” *(cf. Romans 1)*

If this rite is approved for authorisation by the bishops for experimental use, the Governing Body would be acting in a way consonant with the view that the loving and faithful commitment of two persons of the same sex should not be equated with porneia, but is of an entirely different character. Approval of this rite would be stating that the Church in Wales accepts that the loving and faithful commitment of two persons of the same sex, aspiring to life long fidelity and mutual comfort, and who have made a commitment in civil partnership or marriage, is worthy of acceptance by the Church by asking God’s blessing upon their commitment.

The Bench believes that, in the fullness of time, the Governing Body will have to consider whether it wishes to consider a change in the Church’s teaching concerning marriage. This could enable a couple wishing to live in a faithful and mutually committed same-sex relationship to celebrate the rite of marriage in Church. If this step is to be considered, the bench believe that Governing Body will have to make time and provision for a careful theological consideration of the cases for and against, and make a mature and informed decision about whether it wishes to proceed.

In the meantime, the bishops are persuaded that provision should be made for a Rite of Blessing for committed same-sex relationships as soon as conveniently may be. They are therefore bringing forward this legislation to permit a blessing, but in circumstances which at present go no further than affirming what is permitted in the law of the land, namely a rite designed for those in a same-sex relationship who have already availed themselves of their right in law to contract a civil marriage or civil partnership, where their commitment is similar to the sort of commitment made in the Christian understanding of marriage.

This rite is also intended as specifically for same-sex couples, and is not an attempt to make provision for those heterosexual couples who may now, by law, contract a civil partnership. However, it does draw upon the model of fidelity and life long commitment, to which the Church asks those coming to it for marriage to adhere.

Use of the rite would only be permissive. The bishops understand that acceptance of same-sex partnerships remains a controversial view, and that there are Christians who feel unable to read Scripture and Tradition in the more permissive way the bishops propose. It is intended therefore that the adoption of such rites should not carry with it any requirement on any cleric to act against their conscience and to participate in the celebration of the rite. It is rather permissive for those Christians, and their circles of friends and families who wish it, to be able to be honest and open in celebrating the love and commitment of two people to each other, which they have already made in civil law, in the context of their faith, and inviting God’s blessing.

However, it is also a step on the way towards repentance of a history in the Church which has demonised and persecuted gay and lesbian people, forcing them into fear, dishonesty and sometimes even hypocrisy, and which has precluded them from living publicly and honestly lives of committed partnership. The bishops unreservedly and collectively commend the Rite to Governing Body.

+John Cambrensis

+Andrew Bangor

+Gregory Llanelwy

+Joanna Tyddewi

+June Landav

+Cherry Monmouth

28th October 2020.

Adopted by the Standing Committee

26 November 2020

**Memorandwm Esboniadol**

Ym Medi 2018, nododd y Corff Llywodraethol trwy bleidlais anffurfiol eu bod yn cytuno â’r Fainc fel a ganlyn: “Mae’n fugeiliol anghynaliadwy i’r Eglwys barhau i beidio â gwneud unrhyw ddarpariaeth ffurfiol ar gyfer y rhai sydd mewn perthnasoedd o’r un rhywedd”. Ers hynny mae’r esgobion wedi bod yn trafod beth ddylai’r camau nesaf fod, a pha fath o ddarpariaeth ffurfiol y dylid ei chynnig i’r Corff Llywodraethol ei hystyried. Wrth gyflwyno’r bil hwn i gymeradwyo defod y Fendith ar Uniadau o’r Un Rhywedd, mae Mainc yr Esgobion yn ymateb i gynnig 2018, a basiwyd gan fwyafrif a oedd yn fwy na dwy ran o dair o’r Corff Llywodraethol.

Ers y canrifoedd cynnar derbyniodd y traddodiad Cristnogol mai uniad un gŵr ac un wraig gydol eu bywyd oedd y cyd-destun normadol a neilltuol ar gyfer adnabyddiaeth rywiol, gan dderbyn mai dyma’r ddelfryd yr oedd yr Ysgrythurau yn ei chynnal, er gwaethaf bod yna dystiolaeth o wahanol batrymau o amlwreiciaeth ac o bosibl cymeradwyaeth ddistaw o’r arfer ar dudalennau’r Beibl.

Ond fel y dengys llawer agwedd ar fywyd dynol, prin fod y profiad o gydberthynas ddynol mor syml â’r sefyllfa draddodiadol ddelfrydol, a gwelir bod yr Ysgrythur ei hun yn barod i addasu mewn perthynas ag ysgariad er enghraifft, lle mae gwahanol raddau o oddefgarwch wedi eu dangos gan yr Eglwys Gristnogol ar hyd y canrifoedd i gyfathrach rywiol yng nghyd-destun dyweddïad a’r hyn a elwir yn ‘briodas gydnabyddedig’. Yn yr un modd, gwelir bod profiadau rhywiol a arferai fod yn ddi-gondemniad yn yr Ysgrythurau, megis cyfathrach rywiol rhwng meistri a chaethion neu ddyn a gordderch, bellach yn amlwg yn cael eu hystyried yn wrthun.

Ym marn y fainc, mae’r Ysgrythurau yn condemnio “porneia”, chwant dilestair, lle nad oes cyswllt rhwng cyfathrach rywiol ag ymrwymiad ffyddlon y naill i’r llall. Mae’n wir yn yr Ysgrythur bod ymrwymiad ffyddlon o’r fath bob amser yn cael ei bortreadu fel cyfathrach rhwng dyn a menyw trwy gyfamod (priodas), a bod pob cyfathrach rywiol arall, yn cynnwys cyfeiriadau at gyfathrach rhwng pobl o’r un rhywedd yn cael ei bortreadu fel mynegiant o porneia. Serch hynny, yn ystod y ganrif a hanner diwethaf mae dealltwriaeth gymdeithasol, seicolegol, a gwyddonol newydd o rywioldeb wedi datgelu bod modd deall perthynas o’r un rhywedd mewn ffordd gwbl wahanol, ac felly y dylid craffu o’r newydd ar yr Ysgrythur.

Mae cyfeillgarwch o’r un rhywedd - er heb unrhyw oblygiadau clir o gyfathrach rywiol - yn cael ei ddathlu yn y Beibl. Os darllenir yr Ysgrythur yn gywir yn yr ystyr ei bod yn condemnio *porneia*, felly gellir gofyn y cwestiwn a yw ymrwymiadau hir a ffyddlon o’r un rhywedd yn cael eu categoreiddio’n gywir pan ddywedir eu bod yn fynegiant o ‘nwydau gwarthus’ *(gweler Rhufeiniaid 1)*

Os cymeradwyir y ddefod hon i’w hawdurdodi gan yr esgobion at ddefnydd arbrofol, byddai’r Corff Llywodraethol yn gweithredu yn unol â’r safbwynt na ddylid cyffelybu ymrwymiad cariadus a ffyddlon dau unigolyn o’r un rhywedd â *porneia*, a’i fod o gymeriad hollol wahanol. Byddai cymeradwyo’r ddefod hon yn datgan bod yr Eglwys yng Nghymru yn derbyn bod ymrwymiad cariadus a ffyddlon dau unigolyn o’r un rhywedd sy’n dyheu am gydymgeledd a ffyddlondeb gydol eu hoes, ac sydd wedi gwneud ymrwymiad mewn partneriaeth sifil neu briodas, yn haeddu cael eu derbyn gan yr Eglwys trwy ofyn am fendith Duw ar eu hymrwymiad.

Mae’r Fainc yn credu, yng nghyflawnder amser, y bydd yn rhaid i’r Corff Llywodraethol ystyried a yw am ystyried newid athrawiaeth yr Eglwys ar briodas. Gallai hyn alluogi pâr sy’n dymuno byw mewn cydberthynas o’r un rhywedd a chyd-ymrwymo i hynny, i ddathlu defod priodas mewn Eglwys. Os oes bwriad i ystyried y cam hwn, mae’r fainc yn credu y bydd yn rhaid i’r Corff Llywodraethol wneud amser a darpariaeth ar gyfer ystyriaeth ddiwinyddol ofalus o’r achosion o blaid ac yn erbyn, a gwneud penderfyniad aeddfed a gwybodus am ei fwriad i fwrw ymlaen.

Yn y cyfamser, mae’r esgobion wedi eu darbwyllo y dylid darparu Defod Bendith ar gyfer perthynas ymrwymedig o’r un rhywedd cyn gynted ag y bo modd. Felly maen nhw’n cyflwyno’r ddeddfwriaeth hon i ganiatáu bendith, ond dan amgylchiadau nad ydynt ar hyn o bryd yn mynd y tu hwnt i gadarnhau’r hyn a ganiateir yn ôl cyfraith gwlad, sef defod a gynlluniwyd ar gyfer y sawl sydd mewn perthynas o’r un rhywedd sydd eisoes wedi defnyddio eu hawl yn ôl y gyfraith i gontract o briodas sifil neu bartneriaeth sifil, lle mae eu hymrwymiad yn debyg i’r math o ymrwymiad a wneir yn ôl dealltwriaeth Gristnogol o’r hyn yw priodas.

Bwriedir y ddefod hon i fod yn benodol ar gyfer cyplau o’r un rhywedd, ac nid yw’n ymgais i wneud darpariaeth ar gyfer y cyplau heterorywiol hynny a all fod erbyn hyn yn ôl y gyfraith mewn partneriaeth gontract neu sifil. Fodd bynnag, mae’n seiliedig ar fodel o ffyddlondeb ac ymrwymiad gydol oes, sef yr egwyddorion y mae’r Eglwys yn gofyn i’r sawl a ddaw ati i gael eu priodi i ufuddhau iddynt.

Dim ond trwy oddefiad y byddai’r ddefod yn cael ei defnyddio. Mae’r esgobion yn deall bod derbyn partneriaethau o’r un rhywedd yn parhau yn destun dadleuol, a bod yna Gristnogion sy’n teimlo na allant ddarllen yr Ysgrythur a’r Traddodiad yn y modd mwy goddefol y mae’r esgobion yn ei gymeradwyo. Bwriedir felly na fyddai mabwysiadu defodau o’r fath yn rhoi gorfodaeth ar unrhyw glerig i weithredu yn erbyn ei gydwybod a chymryd rhan mewn dathliad o’r ddefod. Yn hytrach, mae’n oddefol i’r Cristnogion hynny, ac i’w ffrindiau a’u teuluoedd estynedig sy’n dymuno gwneud hynny, iddynt allu bod yn onest ac yn agored wrth ddathlu cariad ac ymrwymiad dau unigolyn i’w gilydd, rhywbeth y maent eisoes wedi ei wneud yn wyneb y gyfraith, yng nghyd-destun eu ffydd, ac wrth ofyn am fendith Duw.

Serch hynny mae hefyd yn gam yn y cyfeiriad cywir tuag at edifeirwch am hanes yn yr Eglwys o felltithio ac erlid hoywon a lesbiaid, a’u gorfodi i fywyd o ofn, anonestrwydd ac weithiau rhagrith, a’u heithrio rhag byw bywydau cyhoeddus ac onest a rhannu partneriaeth ymrwymol. Mae’r esgobion un ac oll yn ddiamod yn cyflwyno’r Ddefod gerbron y Corff Llywodraethol.

+John Cambrensis

+Andrew Bangor

+Gregory Llanelwy

+Joanna Tyddewi

+June Landav

+Cherry Monmouth

28 Hydref 2020.

Mabwysiadwyd gan y Pwyllgor Sefydlog

26 Tachwedd 2020