**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

3 December 2020

Dear Member

**BILL TO AUTHORISE EXPERIMENTAL USE OF PROPOSED REVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER (Service of Blessing following a Civil Partnership or Marriage between two people of the same sex)**

## Documents

The following documents are enclosed:

A Bill for Liturgy of Blessing for same-sex Marriages or Civil Partnerships;

Schedule to the Bill;

An Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill.

## Background

In September 2018, the Governing Body indicated by informal poll its 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 the Governing Body for consideration. This Bill to approve a Rite of the Blessing of Same-sex Unions is pursuant to the response by the Bench of Bishops to the indication given by the Governing Body in the informal poll at its September 2018 meeting.

The Bench considers that in time, the Governing Body will have to consider whether it wishes to consider a change in the Church’s teaching concerning marriage, to enable a couple wishing to live in a faithful and mutually committed same-sex relationship to celebrate the rite of marriage in Church. If that step is considered, it will be necessary to make time at the Governing Body for a careful theological consideration of the arguments for and against, and make a mature and informed decision about whether or not to proceed.

For the present time, the bishops consider that provision should be made for a Rite of Blessing for committed same-sex relationships as soon as conveniently may be.

## Procedure

The Bill will proceed under the Bill Procedure set out in sections 27 to 32 of Chapter II of the Constitution.

The Bill has been presented to the Standing Committee. Having been satisfied that the Bill is ‘in order’, the Standing Committee is now publishing it by circulating printed copies in English and Welsh to all members of the Governing Body together with an Explanatory Memorandum.

The Standing Committee has also appointed a Select Committee ‘for the purpose of considering and collating any amendments which members of the Governing Body may wish to move to the Bill’. The following have been invited to be members of the Select Committee:

 Fr John Connell (Chair)

 The Venerable Andrew Jones, Archdeacon of Meirionnydd

The Reverend Andy Jones

 Dr Heather Payne

Mr Luke Spencer \* (with effect from 1 January 2021)

 Mrs Jennie Willson

The Reverend Richard Wood

Any member of the Governing Body may move an amendment to the Bill provided that written notice of any such amendment is given to the Secretary of the Governing Body within three months immediately following publication of the Bill. **Any such amendments should be sent to John Richfield at this office by 3 March 2021.** **johnrichfield@churchinwales.org.uk** If you do put forward an amendment it would be very helpful for the Select Committee if you provide a brief explanation of the reasons for the proposed change.

Within six months of its appointment the Select Committee must report to the Standing Committee on each proposed amendment and on whether or not the Bill should be deemed “non-controversial”. The Select Committee may also make proposals of its own. The Standing Committee must then publish the Select Committee’s report to all members of the Governing Body and must set down the Bill for consideration in Committee at the next Governing Body meeting in accordance with Section 29 of Chapter II of the Constitution.

## Timetable

As indicated above the deadline for members of the Governing Body to submit amendments is 3 March 2021. It is intended that the Select Committee will complete its work in time for the Standing Committee to receive its Report in July 2021 so that the Bill can be brought to the Governing Body in September 2021.

If you have any questions about the papers enclosed please contact John Richfield johnrichfield@churchinwales.org.uk at this office.

Yours sincerely



Simon J Lloyd

Lay Secretary to the Governing Body