

## ANNOUNCEMENT RE THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND –18.1.24

Here at Dundonald we are committed to being a cross-shaped church family - reaching London for Christ. We are gladly loyal to God's Word the Bible, which reveals salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, including our loving creator's design for our human flourishing. In church on Sunday last, and in our Wednesday e-mail for our church family, our Governing Elders have communicated the following regarding some lamentable recent decisions by the Church of England.

### THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: MARRIAGE IS ONLY FOR ONE MAN AND ONE WOMEN... AND HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE IS SIN

- Jesus said, *'at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'* (Matt.19) i.e. Jesus teaches from creation marriage before God is between one man and one woman;
- Paul said, *'Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...'* (1 Cor.6) i.e. while we will all fail in various ways (and the Corinthian church clearly included some who had once been practicing homosexuals who had repented to enjoy cleansing and acceptance in Christ), followers of Jesus must keep repenting of our sins, including all kinds of sexual immorality, which includes homosexual practice, to be saved. This is a salvation issue;
- Jesus said, *'I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality....'* (Rev.2) i.e. it is not only tolerance of sin, but *tolerance of those whose teaching misleads other people* into sin, which is condemned by the risen Jesus;
- Jude writes, *'I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago, have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord'* (Jude 1) i.e. a majority of C of E Bishops (though with some honourable exceptions), who promised at their consecration to teach sound doctrine and drive away error, are guilty of supporting those who claim the grace of God as an excuse for blessing sin. The Bible is clear they are now disgracefully authorising the blessing of sin...

### A LAMENTABLE RECENT DEVELOPMENT

When our church began in 1990 it was openly Church of England. In 2005 we declared ourselves to be placed in 'impaired communion' (i.e. 'broken relationship') by the Bishops of Southwark and Kingston because of their refusal to faithfully teach what the Bible says about sexual morality. In 2012 my licence was reduced to a permission to officiate (PTO) and our relationship with the C of E became more tenuous. In Jan. 2023 the C. of E. House of Bishops concluded years of debate by tragically announcing their proposal to commend, so-called *Prayers of Love and faith* (PLF), for the blessing of same sex relationships in church. On 15th November 2023, the General Synod of the Church of England voted narrowly in favour of introducing PLF. Those commending these prayers claim they are merely seeking God's blessing without any departure from the traditional doctrine of marriage or sexual morality. However, what we pray is what we believe and this authorisation of blessing same-sex relationships is plainly a lamentable denial of God's Word...

## THE AUTHORISED PRAYERS OF LOVE & FAITH (PLF) ARE OFFENSIVE BECAUSE:

- a) They disobey the clear and gracious teaching of God's Word regarding marriage and sexual immorality and the historic teaching of the Christian church in every age and culture;
- b) they claim God blesses sinful lifestyles which, without repentance, will lead many to hell;
- c) they are undermining the courageous godliness of single believers at our church, including same-sex attracted believers, who are, bravely in our British culture, living celibately in obedience to God's Word, as Jesus Christ did;

The entire LLF process has been a disgraceful exercise in relativizing the authority of the Bible by implying all perspectives are welcome even when they flatly contradict the plain reading of God's Word. PLF encourages same-sex attracted people, including those attending our church whom we deeply love, down a path which leads away from God and his salvation instead of lovingly warning us all of our sin and supporting us all in godliness.

We cannot accept this. And we will not walk with those who do.

Encouragingly, a large and growing coalition of orthodox voices has developed to challenge these developments and seek alternative structures. The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) has initiated two such measures nationally (a Panel of alternative spiritual oversight and the Ephesian fund for redirecting giving). Others in London have taken action locally. This holds out some small hope of a de facto alternative to which the orthodox can conscientiously belong. It is right to keep contending for the faith and to support the faithful, as they are supporting us. But any alternative provision within the C of E seems to all trustworthy observers, unlikely any time soon.

Early in 2023 our Governing Elders met to prayerfully consider these issues. We came to the conclusion that unless a new public and credibly separated structure is provided for Biblical churches *within* the C of E, then if the HOB proceeded with their proposals, and since, unlike many faithful churches, we *can* leave, we *must* as a matter of conscience, be clear that we have left the C of E. Our statement in May 2023 included the following commitments...

*'...if the Church of England's General Synod or House of Bishops (HOB): permits liturgical provision for the celebration, dedication, blessing or solemnisation of any sexual relationship other than marriage between one man and one woman, or liturgical provision for the blessing of those in such relationships...[phraseology from widely endorsed CEEC communiques] and no credible, distinct and structural alternate oversight has been provided by 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (being twelve months after the C of E press release announcing the HOB proposals and sufficient time for repentance or such appropriate provision)...we wish to clarify that, irrespective of any confusion in recent years about our relationship to the C of E, Dundonald Church will from 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 not be part of the C of E'*

In light of the commendation on 12th December of PLF prayers within existing church services by the C of E Bishops, we the Governing Elders wish to confirm, in accordance with our previous statement on 21<sup>st</sup> May and with the Word of God, the announcement on our website tomorrow will include the following:

**...from Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> Jan.2024, irrespective of any confusion in recent years about our relationship to the C of E, as a matter of conscience, Dundonald church will unambiguously no longer be a C of E church.**

We have informed the Bishops of Kingston and Southwark of our decision.

In May we also declared:

*'...because we desire to be faithfully Anglican in accordance with Holy Scripture and in full communion with those Anglican Provinces who remain orthodox, we will seek membership of the Anglican Mission in England (being authorised and overseen by the GAFCON Primates) as representing the faithful, global Anglicanism from which the C of E has tragically departed'.*

**However**, in light of the decision by our current Senior Pastor (SP) to step back from his role at the end of August 2024, we consider it wise to delay any commitment to a new denominational allegiance until our new SP has been identified and consulted. It remains open for our new SP to lead us in any of various godly and Biblical directions. It also remains true that after Jan 18<sup>th</sup>, while our church will not be part of the C of E, individual members of our staff team may continue personally to hold a C of E Licence or PTO, so long as they are credibly loyal to our statement of faith and actively contend for the faith of Holy Scripture.

## **IN CONCLUSION: LET US PRAY, KEEP OUR UNITY & PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL**

- ⇒ **Let's not be anxious but pray**, *'don't be anxious about anything., but in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God'* (Phil.4) – please feel free to talk to any of our Pastors and Governing Elders but above all let's pray and trust God;
- ⇒ **Let's not be divided but stand firm**- *'stand firm in the one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you'* (Phil.1) – even if we might have decided differently, let's maintain our unity in God's Word;
- ⇒ **Let's not be distracted but keep proclaiming salvation in Christ**, *'Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.'* (1 Corinthians 15). Let's not be side-tracked by unattractive denominational arguments from proclaiming salvation in Christ to all who will turn from their sin to follow him.

After thirty-three years of operating within and on the edge of the Church of England, this is a significant moment in our church history, and very sad for those of us who have received training and served within the Church of England for many years. We are immensely grateful for all the prayers and the many encouragements of our church family in this conviction-driven course of action.

May God be honoured by this decision, as also in all things, for we do so in accordance with his Word, in the Unity of his Spirit, for the glory of his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*With love in Christ,*

*Richard Coekin (Senior Pastor)* on behalf of our Governing Elders: John Marland, Julian Plescia, Mark Chambers, Alwin Swales, Von Sy, Stephen Hatherall, Pete Watson, Santhosh Thomas, Richard Leadbeater and Richard Coekin.