

After the Vote: What Are The Options?

As clergy and congregations consider the implications of the General Synod of the Church of England's decision to go ahead with standalone services of blessing for same-sex couples. Anglican Futures recognises that every situation is different and is on hand to offer a listening ear and bespoke advice.

Remain in the CofE: Informal Fellowship	Remain in the CofE: Informal Fellowship + 'Irregular' Actions	Remain in the CofE: Formally recognised 'pastoral provision'	Leave the CofE: Remain Anglican	Leave the CofE: Join another denomination
<p>This has been the default option for most Anglicans in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Decades of episcopal neglect have led to the formation of numerous 'informal' networks, which offer pastoral and spiritual encouragement.</p> <p>Lay people and clergy have looked to Diocesan Evangelical Fellowships, New Wine, Anglican Essentials Wales, ReNew, Church Society, HTB leaders, and numerous other networks for inspiration and leadership.</p> <p>Clergy have supported one another through accountability groups or by seeking a spiritual director.</p> <p>Bishops, archdeacons and the diocese have often been a distant, largely bureaucratic presence in the life of the local parish church.</p> <p>For many, particularly for those in team ministries or 'mixed' congregations, this might seem the only viable option.</p>	<p>This is the option that some conservative evangelicals have taken in the past, for example, Jesmond Parish Church and the Co-Mission network in London/ Southwark. It appears to be what CEEC/ The Alliance are looking to offer in the future through the 'de facto parallel province.'</p> <p>Alternative Spiritual Oversight will allow parishes to enjoy visits and pastoral care from an orthodox 'overseer'. It is possible that irregular ordinations might take place – though there would be no guarantee that bishops would agree to license clergy ordained in this way.</p> <p>The Ephesians Fund ensures parish share is paid, but with the proviso that it will go to orthodox ministry.</p> <p>The structures are informal – in that they are not recognised by the Church of England and although the parish may declare itself in 'impaired fellowship' the relationship between the parish and the diocesan bishop is fundamentally unaltered.</p>	<p>The bishops of the Church of England have offered to explore some form of limited delegated episcopal ministry for parishes that do not share their diocesan bishop's theological convictions about the use of PLF.</p> <p>This sounds similar to that currently offered to parishes that cannot accept the ministry of female bishops. The diocesan bishop retains authority in the parish but allows another bishop to offer specific ministries to those parishes which request provision.</p> <p>The alternative bishop may also be able to sponsor candidates for ordination and have some input into the appointment of clergy to parishes which request their assistance. This could be formalised with the creation of a Society or Community within the Church of England.</p> <p>This is likely to require clergy and parishes to accept their bishops' theological convictions as being a valid expression of Anglican doctrine.</p>	<p>Clergy and lay people who cannot accept the episcopal oversight of those they believe have stepped outside apostolic teaching may decide they have no option but to leave the Church of England.</p> <p>Even if all the clergy and all the congregation wish to leave, the parish and all its assets have to remain.</p>	<p>Many lay people have chosen to leave their local parish church and find refuge in whatever bible-believing, gospel proclaiming church they can find in their local area. Some retired clergy are doing the same.</p> <p>For some the change of denomination represents a change in their ecclesiology. Some Anglican clergy have realised their understanding of the church is actually more Presbyterian or Free Church and others have turned to the Roman Catholic Church or one of the Orthodox Churches. This can involve re-ordination or re-baptism, so such decisions cannot be taken lightly.</p> <p>For others the decision is more pragmatic and while they are grateful for an orthodox place to worship, they are waiting and praying for an ANiE church to be planted in their area.</p>
<p>While an orthodox incumbent may be able to offer orthodox ministry presently, and churches might thrive, the question is who will replace them. This is why many have referred to 'cut flower' ministries or 'terminal orthodoxy'.</p>				

A summary like this can only give the bare minimum of information. Find out more at:
<https://www.anglicanfutures.org/post/thinking-about-your-anglican-future>