

Latimer's Curate

I'm a little uncomfortable as all good curacies must come to an end and eventually a Bishop will unleash me on an unsuspecting parish.

That arguably could be cause for my future parish to feel a little uncomfortable too! When looking at the future there is much to be uncomfortable about: the fear of not knowing where I will be placed, what will the parish be like, will they accept me, will they expect me to robe up at every service?

But there is something greater than these questions that causes me concern and discomfort. What will the Anglican Church be like after the General Synod's deliberations in May 2014 on the blessing of people in same-sex relationships? Will it be a church that has changed its doctrine and accepted the blessing of same-gender relationships, or not? Will future Anglican Vicars, such as I hope to become, be forced into performing marriages for same-gender couples, even if my conscience and understanding of the plain reading of Scripture says otherwise?

I was baptised and confirmed in the Anglican Church, I've grown up an Anglican, I've always attended an Anglican church, and, despite a rebellious stage in my early teen years when I tried out a Baptist youth group for a few months, I have always considered myself proudly Anglican. However, what I have come to believe was Anglican (or should I say, what a Christian is as a member of the Anglican Church), well, that may all be about to change.

For me, part of being uniquely Anglican is maintaining the rich tradition that is grounded solidly in the Holy Scriptures, stated in the 39 Articles and expressed through our Prayer Books. These form the basis of my Anglican doctrine, and include the service of marriage between a man and a woman, and the commitment of deacons, priests and bishops to chastity in all their relationships. However, will not any change made by General Synod with regard to same-sex relationships also be a change in our Anglican doctrine and tradition?

If General Synod does decide to proceed with any changes, I don't know when they are likely to be implemented – I've heard it could take years. But the point is this: when I am placed by my Bishop into a future parish, will it be one that belongs to the same Anglican Church that I signed up for, or will it be one that has departed from its Anglican roots?

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In reality, the question that causes me the most discomfort is what exactly can I or can't I preach and teach from the Bible? It appears that my freedom of speech may well be curtailed. It's likely I will not be able to teach that a Christian marriage is between a man and a woman as has always been the case in the Anglican Church. Nor would I be able to teach about the Biblical requirements for sexual faithfulness of Christian leaders in the traditional manner. In addition, the whole nature of repentance from sin will be redefined and made optional – some sins, like engaging in homosexual practice, will somehow be made exempt!

I could be wrong, but unless General Synod maintains the standard of our Anglican doctrine, stands by the formularies of our church, and upholds our rich tradition & scriptural heritage, then it could begin to get very uncomfortable and confusing for a young, wet-behind-the-ears curate like myself.