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## Church of England angers evangelicals by 'welcoming' transgender people

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The Church of England has been slammed by anti-LGBT evangelicals after it set out the case for welcoming transgender people.

The Church recently voiced its support for transgender people, saying it “welcomes and encourages the unconditional affirmation of trans people, equally with all people, within the Church, the body of Christ, and rejoices in the diversity of that one body, into which all Christians have been baptized by one Spirit”

Facing pressure to adopt a 'naming' ceremony to support people in their transition, the Church added that “the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith, found in Common Worship, is an ideal liturgical rite which trans people can use to mark this moment of personal renewal”.

There is nothing in the Bible that condemns transgender people – but the decision to provide tacit approval has led to anger from anti-LGBT evangelicals.

Anti-LGBT campaign group Christian Concern said the Church was “perpetuating fundamental theological errors such as blasphemy, rebellion against God as Creator, dishonouring parents, and renaming God”.

It said: “the transgender pathway is shown to be a counterfeit of the Christian gospel. This will affect people’s trust in the clergy as well as the integrity of theological training. Repentance for colluding with transgender ideology is the Church of England’s only hope before God.”

The group said: “For the Church of England clergy at any level of the church hierarchy to allow the crafting of liturgy that affirms and celebrates gender reassignment means that the Church endorses gender reassignment as if God approves it.

“This is collusion with the blasphemous notion that someone can be ‘born in the wrong body’. It is blasphemous because it claims that God gave a person ‘the wrong body’, when the bodies of people suffering with gender dysphoria are usually perfectly healthy. Rather it is their minds and souls that are the site of suffering and confusion.

“It is also collusion with hatred and resentment of the male or female body, something that goes directly against what God said when he created everything, namely that it was ‘very good’.

“It is therefore an attack on the triune God as Creator of all things. The Christian faith makes no sense at all without the history of creation and fall.”

Meanwhile, pro-LGBT groups lamented the decision of the Church to avoid directly creating a trans-affirming ceremony.

Tracey Byrne, CEO of OneBodyOneFaith and a General Synod member, said: “This feels like kicking trans people into the long grass – just like the wider LGBT communities were kicked into the long grass by the bishops’ woeful report last February.

“More fine words about welcome – but denying trans people the services and pastoral support they themselves have told us would actually make a real difference.”

She added: “It’s no particular surprise that the bishops have fallen so short of the mark, given their failure to consult with or listen to trans people’s experiences, but that’s no excuse.

“Officially authorised services would have sent a strong message from the very top of the institution that trans people really matter; that was the message at July synod. Sadly once again the bishops have failed to step up to the challenge set them by General Synod, the Church’s own governing body.”

Canon Peter Leonard, Chair of OneBody and also a General Synod member, said that he already knew of many positive examples of clergy devising beautiful and moving services for trans people, and that he felt it likely they would continue to do so, but that such a situation could not be allowed to remain the church’s official position.

He said: “All those of us who want to see a church which reflects the radical inclusion of Jesus will stand alongside our trans sisters and brothers who are once more being let down by the church of which we’re a part.

“Our message to the bishops is simple, as it was last February; we’ll work with you, but we won’t wait for you. This latest move demonstrates once more that they are out of step not just with the mind of Synod, but with the broader church and society too.”

<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/01/26/church-of-england-angers-evangelicals-by-welcoming-transgender-people/>