

Methodist Church

Response from the Rev Graeme Halls

There are two issues here which I hope the panel in its review will not allow to get muddled up!

1. Same sex (Equal) Marriage is being introduced into many western governments almost whatever their religious history or context is. Of course individuals will take their own view, perhaps based on their religious background or it may be generational, younger people seem much more receptive to this than older people. The view that in societies where we treat people equally and respect them for who they are, but then to deprive them of the things that people like myself take for granted, that is 'marrying the person I love', is patently wrong. We can no longer discriminate in this way, and most accept this, sometimes despite our own private views. We also know that peoples views change, even in churches, when faced with this issue in their family. Whilst various single verses can be pointed to in the Bible (others which also support slavery and deny women a voice in church) the over-riding message is of respect, tolerance, love and in an inclusive gospel (for instance Jesus meeting openly with lepers, women and the mentally ill). Times change and the bible is not set in a moment and then for ever, Christians are people of faith not of a book. I hope the panel will not stand in the way of this law.

2. What can happen is that there are those who because of 'their conscience' find that engagement with people in same sex marriage or even relationships difficult. The 'cake baker and [b@b](#) hotelier' are given as examples. But we cannot live in a world that allows people to discriminate against others. This turns these people into victims, which is entirely wrong, we cannot condone this sort of behaviour. We cannot discriminate on the basis of colour, or gender, or race or culture. It is also the case that well funded fundamentalist groups are very happy to back such people as their examples. It is not the role of a cake baker to decide who they will and will not bake a cake for. It reminds me of the 1950's where those who let out rooms in UK put notices in their windows saying 'no blacks'. We cannot allow this to happen in this case.

This cannot be allowed to skew the debate about a law that seeks to treat all equally, and for society to respect those who live within the law.

As far as the Church is concerned, the ability to opt in as we wish according to the rules set down in the law and our own churches, is all we can expect, but it is enough.

I hope for the sake of many who have plans made for weddings in 2018 and others to follow, that this review will be concluded speedily and the law passed with overwhelming support giving a message that we live in an open and tolerant Island, as I believe we do.

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