

Conversation

A Whole Church Discussion of Same Sex Relationships

Design Group Framework 2014

*The plan is to provide a **Conversation** – a framework for a whole church discussion about same sex relationships within the life of the Scottish Episcopal Church, in which the emphasis is on listening, personal sharing and theological reflection, collaborating through difference and shaping a direction together – ahead of any subsequent synodical debating and decision-making process. The stages through the year are:*

- In March each Diocesan Synod will have an agenda item on this topic which includes an update on the Design Group's work presented by one of its members. Dioceses may also include some facilitated discussion and question time.
- On 29-30 April at the Atholl Palace Hotel Pitlochry an event entitled *Cascade Conversation – Listening across the spectrum* is planned for fifty invited participants, lay and clergy, representing a full range of viewpoints, chosen by the seven bishops. The time will include contributors and facilitated group discussion. Participants will commit to upholding the necessary safe space and confidentiality, and will evaluate their experiences.
- Those attending *Cascade Conversation* are charged with returning to their diocese to share the insights gained with their Bishop and others as seems best, to encourage continuing whole church discussion about same sex relationships and in particular to prepare their representatives who will be attending General Synod in Edinburgh 12-14 June.
- At General Synod, members will have an opportunity to hear back from the *Cascade Conversation* and we hope there will be an opportunity to pick up in further group discussion matters concerning same sex relationships and issues arising from *Cascade*. . At their 3-4 September meeting the College of Bishops are committed to an in-depth discussion of their own views on same sex relationships in the life of the Church.
- During the autumn, taking into account General Synod outcomes, dioceses are encouraged to arrange further opportunities for *Conversation* – for example amongst diocesan, regional and local groups, in congregations and clergy chapters – perhaps drawing on the experience and encouragement of those who participated at Pitlochry in April.
- It is anticipated that the Design Group will complete its work by the end of November with a report to the Mission and Ministry Board.

+Nigel 20 February 2014