MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM ST MARY’S CATHEDRAL, GLASGOW

How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?
In support

I support any proposals to bring equality between people and in particular support these moves to allow same-sex couples to enter into marriage. Vigilance is needed to ensure that there is only one institution of marriage.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?
In support

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?
Neither

The current proposals certainly do not put belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants. In particular, they appear to allow only groups of people who have a non-theistic worldview to band together to be recognised for the purpose of cele

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?
In opposition

The current proposed arrangements do not establish equality in the law. (See answer to previous question). The proposals lean too far towards trying to please those who are opposed in principle to all marriages of same-sex couples. It is unreasonable to expect a religious denomination to agree before opting in to the legislation. Some religious groups have a far lower expectation of conformity than the government seems to be trying to impose on them. Those trying to legislate seem to have forgotten that religious celebrants also have human rights. No-one can make anyone conduct any religious ceremony they don't want to conduct without infringing those rights. The human rights of celebrants are the means by which religious people cannot be forced to do a same-sex marriage against their will. The legislation is over prescriptive in this area. The principle that is now well accepted that religious people who object to same-sex marriage should not be forced to conduct them should have a corollary. It also should be the case that religious people who are currently able to celebrate marriages of straight couples should not be prevented in law from conducting same-sex marriages. The legislation in trying to protect the former is in danger of discriminating against the latter.
How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In support

I support the idea that Civil Partnerships should be able to be changed to marriages. I believe that this should be possible with the minimal amount of paperwork and at no further cost to the couples involved.

How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?

I support this. It should have happened years ago.

How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?

In opposition

I don't believe there is any call for the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships. I think that this is a contradiction in terms.

How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?

In support

Fully supportive of this move - it rights an obvious wrong.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?

I think that the process of moving towards this legislation has concentrated far too much on the "protections" for those who have concerns about same-sex marriage. The government needs to be clear that there is one institution of marriage. The government also needs to be clear that there should be no protection in law for anyone seeking to encourage prejudice and discrimination when working with young people. I am very concerned at the idea of extending "protection" in this area in schools. All who work with children in schools should be expected to teach respect for all who are married. It would be unacceptable to me for teachers to be paid by the state who were teaching that some people who have gone through a marriage ceremony were really not married at all.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?

I don't believe that people have an absolute right to freedom of speech in Scotland. For example, freedom of speech would be no defence for someone who was accused of encouraging racism in the classroom. Similarly, there are many situations where appealing to freedom of speech is an inappropriate defence when considering attitudes relating to LGBT people.
Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?

Are you responding as...

a celebrant
I am the Provost of St Mary's Cathedral, Scottish Episcopal Church, Glasgow

Kelvin Holdsworth
Provost
St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow
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