

**The Benefice of Highnam,
Tibberton with Rudford and Taynton
and the Parish of Minsterworth**

The Rectory
25 Maidenhall
Highnam
GL2 8DJ

revheatherdg@gmail.com

01452 942173

Prayers of Love and Faith

29th May 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Many of you will be aware of the ongoing conversation and division within the wider Church of England on the subject of same sex relationships and in particular the provision of services to celebrate such relationships.

Here in the Benefice, in February and March, we ran the Living in Love and Faith Course to explore some of the issues together and I am grateful to those who gave their time to come to these sessions and for their care, sensitivity and honesty in the conversations we shared together. We also ran a standalone session where we looked at the suite of material commended by the House of Bishops for use in praying with same sex couples to mark their committed relationship to one another. Currently these prayers are only for use as part of existing services and not as standalone services but this will be returning to General Synod in due course for further discussion and decision. Throughout the process, I have been clear that I would be willing to use these prayers in services if I had PCC support to do so.

I am writing to make sure you are all aware of the decision taken by our PCCs with regard to the use of these prayers in our churches. The PCCs of Highnam, Tibberton with Rudford and Minsterworth all voted in favour of using these prayers as part of existing services immediately and indicated their willingness to welcome their further use outside of existing services if approved by General Synod. Taynton voted to not use these prayers within an existing service but indicated their willingness to use them outside of existing services if this is approved by General Synod.

It is important that you are all aware that these prayers are not a marriage service but are offered to a couple who have made a commitment to one another in a secular service and wish to celebrate their commitment and relationship in church. The Prayers of Love and Faith have been commended by the House of Bishops for use in praying with and for a same-sex couple who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God. To celebrate in God's presence the commitment two people have made to each other is an occasion for rejoicing. The texts are offered to express thanksgiving and hope, with prayer that those who are dedicating their life together to God may grow in faith, love and service as God's blessing rests upon them.

I am aware that there will be those amongst you who greet these PCC decisions with joy and excitement but I am equally aware that there will be those who feel they cannot support the use of these prayers. I would like to reassure you that you are not going to be asked to support or attend anything you feel you cannot; when these prayers are planned for use, this will be made clear on the pewsheets for the week so you will not ever be taken by surprise during a service. As your parish priest I am available to talk to should you wish to discuss these issues in more detail. I have also communicated the PCC decisions to Bishop Rachel and she has asked me to tell you all that she too can be contacted if you have concerns you wish to discuss.

With prayers and blessings

Rev. Heather