

To Have and To Hold – the theology of marriage

27th September 2014

10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m

Workshops: 12 noon to 1pm

1 Marriage Law and the Church of England – Scot Peterson

‘Most of the Equal Marriage Act is about the Church of England.’ Is this true? What’s the real position of the Church of England vis-à-vis equal marriage? Scot Peterson is co-author of *Legally Married: Love and Law in the UK and the US*

2 It’s all about Patriarchy - Bishop Alan Wilson (Bishop of Buckingham) and Canon Rosie Harper

What’s the relationship between marriage as traditionally understood and patriarchy? How much has this affected theological understandings of equal marriage? Is there a way to understand marriage which isn’t patriarchal? Bishop Alan and Canon Rosie Harper are well known advocates for greater inclusion in the C of E.

3 An invitation to the feast: A positive Biblical approach to equal marriage – Simon Taylor

This workshop seeks to offer a rich Biblical account of marriage, and to locate equal marriage within this. This is not a defensive approach to the Bible, but a deep engagement with the life-giving word of God. It looks at the Bible as a whole, and not just at a few verses scattered within it. Simon Taylor is Canon Chancellor and CME Officer for the Diocese of Derby

4 Sexuality and Africa - Davis Mac-Iyalla

Homosexuality is illegal in 38 African countries. In Nigeria displays of affection between homosexual couples in public are illegal and punishable by a maximum of 10 years imprisonment.

The workshop will explain that cultural varieties of same-sex relationships have long been part of traditional African life.

Davis Mac-Iyalla is Nigerian, now resident in the UK, and has campaigned for LGBT rights in Nigeria for many years.

5 Love's constancy & legal niceties: transgender theological perspectives on marriage – Revd. Tina Beardsley and Susan Gilchrist

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 has eliminated the need for a couple to divorce when one of them transitions, but has raised other problems, particularly the requirement of spousal consent to Gender Recognition, and the backdating of pension rights. This experiential workshop will reflect theologically on marriage in the light of these and other realities of trans people's lives and relationships. It is led by two trans people, Susan Gilchrist and Tina Beardsley, who are both members of the Sibyls, and have each been with their partner for over four decades. Both are married to their partner: one for the whole of that time, the other following transition.

6 Liturgies for same-sex blessings and marriages - Colin Coward

Blessings of same-sex relationships have been held in Church of England churches for decades, and now it is likely that services will be held following marriage. What liturgies are available? Should we be preparing more? Colin Coward is director of Changing Attitude and has campaigned for full inclusion for three decades.

7 Free to vote in favour of equal marriage -Amy Willshire

Why an East London Church belonging to both the Baptist Union of GB and United Reformed Church denominations voted in favour of conducting services of Equal Marriage. Amy Willshire, a deacon in the church will share some of the discussions, reflections and prayers that Leytonstone United Free Church considered in the lead up to and following a church meeting vote and why they wanted to be among the first in the country to register.

8 Marriage, yes. But is it queer?: Does Queer Theology have anything to say to the Churches? - Clare Herbert

In this workshop Clare Herbert will explore the nature of Queer Theology and ask what its contributions may be to the concept of "Gay Marriage". Clare is tutor for contextual theology and mission for the South East Institute of Theological Education and is pursuing doctoral research with gay and lesbian Christians at St Martin in the Fields about the meanings they give to their permanent long term relationships.