

Dear Friends

The Methodist Conference meeting in Birmingham and online agreed the proposals contained in *God in Love Unites Us* (GILUU) – with some minor modifications.

I quote one of the speakers who has been a leading and inspiring evangelical in the Methodist Church for many years, Rev Paul Smith, “This is no time for triumphalism”.

Let me be completely honest and open with you. For over 40 years I have hoped and prayed for a more inclusive attitude towards people in what is now called the LGBTQ+ community. But on Wednesday, when all the votes had been cast, I felt a sense of sadness because I couldn't help but think of all those in the District and beyond for whom this decision causes pain. We are a divided church on so many issues but for some, this is particularly hard.

I continue to believe that there are safeguards in place for ministers who, out of conscience, cannot marry same sex couples. I continue to believe that it is proper that Church Councils have the right to decide whether their church building can be used for conducting such marriages. I know that this is difficult for some to accept, while for others it opens up new opportunities and they will rejoice in what has been decided.

I hope those hurting people will remain faithful to the Methodist Church. Important as the issues raised by GILUU are, there are so many other matters which occupy us as individual Christians and churches. We will not just be weaker as a church if people leave, but we will be less diverse and spiritually poorer.

If anyone feels the need for a conversation with me then please get in touch. I resume my Sabbatical on Monday 5 July but I regard this as such an important issue that I am happy to engage if anyone wishes to do so.

God bless

Paul