

Shared Conversations: Books

Sent to General Synod members before their meeting by different interest groups, these are all quite short readable books.

The Plausibility Problem: the church and same-sex attraction by Ed Shaw, IVP (2015) 166pp

“Ed Shaw experiences same-sex attraction and yet he is committed to what the Bible says and what the church has always taught about marriage and sex. ...he shares his pain in dealing with these issues but, at the same time, shows us that obedience to Jesus is ultimately the only way to experience life to the full.” From the book cover introduction.

Amazing Love, Theology for Understanding Discipleship and Mission edited by Andrew Davison, Darton, Longman and Todd, (2016) 93pp

“In short, accessible chapters Andrew Davison explores issues of sexuality in relation to Being Followers of Jesus, Being Human, Being Biblical, Being Part of the Story, Being in Love, and Being Missional.” From the book cover introduction.

Journeys in Grace and Truth, Revisiting Scripture and Sexuality edited by Jayne Ozanne, Via Media (2016) 85pp

“Is it possible to hold a positive view of same-sex relationships while being a biblically rooted evangelical? These writers believe so. [The book] sets out the path each contributor has travelled to reach this point, involving moving encounters, scriptural exegesis and personal revelations.” From the book cover introduction.

NB The Mission and Ministry Department has a small supply of these books available for loan to groups which would otherwise find it difficult to access them. Please contact Pauline Godfrey: pgodfrey@glosdioc.org.uk; 01452 835548.

Other Books

There have been many publications on this topic and those mentioned below are ones which have come to the attention of the people from the Diocese who participated in the Share Conversations.

Love is an Orientation: Elevating the Conversation with the Gay Community by Andrew Marin, IVP (2009)

When three of Andrew Marin's friends came out to him in the span of three months, he was confronted head-on with the question of how to reconcile his friends with his faith. Love Is an Orientation is the result of years of wrestling with this issue. In the book, Marin speaks out with compassion and conviction, elevating the conversation between Christianity and the LGBT community so that the focus is moved from genetics to gospel, where it really belongs.

Paperback: 204 pages; **Publisher:** IVP Books (25 Mar. 2009)
ISBN-10: 0830836268; **ISBN-13:** 978-0830836260

A companion volume is: **Love Is an Orientation: Participant's Guide** – 13 Dec 2011

Practical Ways to Build Bridges with the Gay Community

In this six-session small group Bible study, *Love is an Orientation*, Andrew Marin leads you in peaceful and productive ways to engage the theological, political and social disconnects between the Christian community and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

Today's culture often defines bridge building and reconciliation as a one-way street that leads to full theological, political and social agreement. Yet Christ demonstrated a different path of religious and cultural engagement to establish his kingdom here on earth.

In light of such countercultural principles, the Christian community needs a new view on the issues that divide conservative believers and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities.

Andrew Marin uses practical applications he's learned over the last decade of living and working in the LGBT neighbourhood of Chicago (Boystown), as well as his international speaking and consulting ministry, to offer a variety of practical teaching, insights, and life-lessons on reaching the LGBT community.

Rather than avoiding the topic of homosexuality, *Love Is an Orientation* aims to equip the Christian community to bridge the gap between LGBT and religious communities. Instead of discussing how to fix gay people, this small group Bible study is all about getting to know them, engage them, and love them like Jesus does. After this study, you, your small group and your church will know what it means to peacefully and productively build bridges with the LGBT community.

Paperback: 96 pages; **Publisher:** Zondervan; First edition (13 Dec. 2011)
ISBN-10: 0310891272; **ISBN-13:** 978-0310891277

Sexuality: The Inclusive Church Resource, Darton, Longman & Todd, London (2014)

There is a huge need for churches to be more inclusive - some might be more inclusive in some areas than others (both in attitude and resources), but on the whole this is a massive failing of churches. Most church leaders recognise this failing but lack the resources and understanding to effect meaningful change. The Inclusive Church Resources aim to educate, to reflect theologically and to provide practical advice and guidance. Each chapter contains first-hand personal experiences of people from the marginalised group, a theological reflection by a leading thinker and a resource section containing addresses, websites and practical advice on improving your

church's inclusivity. The theological section on sexuality is written by Susannah Cornwall.

Paperback: 96 pages; **Publisher:** Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd (29 Oct. 2014)

ISBN-10: 023253067X; **ISBN-13:** 978-0232530674

A companion to this is **The Inclusive Church Small Group Study Guide** which can be downloaded from <http://inclusive-church.org/sexuality>

Single Minded by Kate Wharton, Monarch (2013)

We live in a couples culture, where a partner, if not a spouse, is assumed; where the expectation is that unmarried people will be sexually active even if not in a committed relationship. But what about those who because of their faith, or their preferences, choose to remain celibate until they find Mr or Miss Right? Kate Wharton tackles directly and compassionately the questions that this choice throws up: issues of identity (church roles and social invitations alike too often assume 'a couple'); finance (it is much cheaper to live together than alone); sexual pressure (staying pure, in thought as well as deed); friendship (including being friends with the opposite sex) and calling (the cost of obedience may preclude marriage). What challenges face those who, through divorce or death, are single again? This positive, honest book will be a source of wisdom and comfort to anyone who is single, whether or not they expect to remain so.

Paperback: 192 pages; **Publisher:** Monarch Books; 1st New edition (21 Jun. 2013)

ISBN-10: 0857214306; **ISBN-13:** 978-0857214300

Covenant and Calling: Towards a Theology of Same-Sex Relationships by Robert Song, SCM Press (2014)

No other issue in recent times has proved as potentially divisive for the churches as that of same-sex relationships. At the same time as many countries have been moving towards legal recognition of civil partnerships or same-sex marriage, Christian responses have tended towards either finding alliances with proponents of conservative social mores, or providing what amounts to theological endorsement of secular liberal values.

Against both trends, Robert Song's book advances a theological account of marriage and sexuality which appeals to the central biblical theme of the fulfilment of creation in Christ, but is also open to the possibility of same-sex relationships. Rejecting treatments of the Bible which concentrate on a small number of well-rehearsed texts on same-sex relationships to the exclusion of the Bible's overarching narrative, this book provides a fresh interpretation of the Christian tradition and defends a vision of the church which embraces a plurality of callings, to marriage, celibacy, and covenant partnership.

Paperback: 128 pages; **Publisher:** SCM Press (30 Sept. 2014)

ISBN-10: 0334051886; **ISBN-13:** 978-0334051886

Is God antigay? by Sam Allberry, The Good Book Company (2013)

It's the hot topic of the moment. Christians, the church and the Bible seem to be out of step with modern attitudes towards homosexuality. And there is growing hostility towards those who hold a different view. So is God homophobic? And what do we say, and how do we relate to both Christians and non-Christians who experience same-sex attraction. In this short, simple book, Sam Allberry wants to help confused Christians understand what God has said about these questions in the scriptures, and offers a positive and liberating way forward through the debate.

Paperback: 88 pages; **Publisher:** The Good Book Company (16 July 2013)

ISBN-10: 1908762314; **ISBN-13:** 978-1908762313

Living Reconciliation by Phil Groves and Angharad Parry Jones, SPCK (2014)

This book is intended as a platform to enable people to engage with and understand the Archbishop of Canterbury's thinking on and methodology for reconciliation. Emerging from the Anglican Communion in collaboration with the Lambeth staff, the book has a strong focus on the indaba process which marked the 2008 Lambeth conference, on drawing lessons from practical stories from around the Communion, and on tying the process to the Bible at every point.

Paperback: 194 pages; **Publisher:** SPCK Publishing (18 Sept. 2014)

ISBN-10: 0281072264; **ISBN-13:** 978-0281072262

Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality by Wesley Hill, Zondervan (2010)

'Gay,' 'Christian,' and 'celibate' don't often appear in the same sentence. Yet many who sit next to us in the pew at church fit that description, says author Wesley Hill. As a celibate gay Christian, Hill gives us a glimpse of what it looks like to wrestle first hand with God's 'No' to same-sex relationships. What does it mean for gay Christians to live faithful to God while struggling with the challenge of their homosexuality? What is God's will for believers who experience same-sex desires? Those who choose celibacy are often left to deal with loneliness and the hunger for relationships. How can gay Christians experience God's favour and blessing in the midst of a struggle that for many brings a crippling sense of shame and guilt?

Weaving together reflections from his own life and the lives of other Christians, such as Henri Nouwen and Gerard Manley Hopkins, Hill offers a fresh perspective on these questions. He advocates neither unqualified 'healing' for those who struggle, nor their accommodation to temptation, but rather faithfulness in the midst of brokenness. 'I hope this book may encourage other homosexual Christians to take the risky step of opening up

their lives to others in the body of Christ,' Hill writes. 'In so doing, they may find, as I have, by grace, that being known is spiritually healthier than remaining behind closed doors, that the light is better than the darkness.'

Paperback: 160 pages; **Publisher:** Zondervan (14 Sept. 2010)
ISBN-10: 0310330033; **ISBN-13:** 978-0310330035

New Edition 12-Jan-2017

This updated and expanded edition of the original book includes an additional chapter that continues Wesley's story and further reflections on spiritual friendships and how the church can be a more welcoming place for those who choose to embrace a celibate calling."

Paperback: 224 pages; **Publisher:** Zondervan; Enlarged edition (12 Jan. 2017)
ISBN-10: 0310534194; **ISBN-13:** 978-0310534198

The Gay Gospels: Good News for Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgendered People by Dr Keith Sharpe, Circle Books London (2011)

The place of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the Christian churches is a highly controversial issue. The stance of all the mainline churches is that homosexuality is sinful and incompatible with Christianity. In seeking to respond to attacks on their lives, identities and relationships LGBT Christians have moved over recent decades from a defensive position to a more affirmative position which asserts that there is evidence in the Bible and the Jesus tradition of validated homoerotic experience.

This book presents a systematic overview of both the defensive and affirmative positions. In part one, The Defensive Testament, each of the so-called 'biblical texts of terror' used to demonise LGBT people is considered in turn and found wanting. None of them has anything to say about consensual same sex love. In part two, The Affirmative Testament, homoerotic elements in various Bible stories including the healing of the centurion's servant, Jesus and the beloved disciple, David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi are revealed to make visible the place of LGBT lives in the Biblical tradition. Taken together, these two testaments forcefully champion the equality of LGBT people in the Kingdom of God and represent a formidable challenge to ecclesiastical homophobia.

Paperback: 160 pages; **Publisher:** Circle Books (28 Jun. 2011)
ISBN-10: 1846945488; **ISBN-13:** 978-1846945489

God, Gentiles and Gay Christians: Acts 15 and Change in the Church by Andrew Goddard, Grove booklet (E121) (2001)

Those who argue for the acceptance of homosexual practice in the church ('revisionists') have often argued their case on the basis of rights or justice or causality, but have not usually sought a biblically-based authorisation. But some recent commentators have argued that the acceptance of Gentiles into the early Jewish church, as depicted in Acts 15, provides an analogous case

with the acceptance of homosexual Christians into a heterosexual church.

This booklet looks at the argument, carefully teases out the different strands and assumptions, and evaluates the strength of this potentially important case. It will be essential reading for anyone interested in this crucial debate.

Paperback: 24 pages; **Publisher:** Grove Books Ltd (April 2001)

ISBN-10: 1851744614; **ISBN-13:** 978-1851744619

Dirt, Greed & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today by L. William Countryman, SCM Classics; Paperback (2011)

Dirt, Greed and Sex is one of the most influential studies published in recent times on the subject of sexual ethics. Discussing biblical notions of purity and property, which dominate ethical ideas in the New Testament, the author characterises sex as one of the rich blessings of creation, 'to be received with delight and thanksgiving' Countryman's generous and irenic views on sexual matters, based as they are on solid biblical research, are a welcome intervention in an area which unfortunately, in Christian circles, still tends to be dominated by conservatism and misinformation rather than principle. L William Countryman is Professor of New Testament at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley.

Paperback: 322 pages; **Publisher:** SCM Press; New edition (1 Feb. 2011)

ISBN-10: 0334028574; **ISBN-13:** 978-0334028574

Human Sexuality and the 'Same Sex Marriage' Debate, ed. Mark D Thompson (2015)

The current debates about gender, the meaning of marriage and human sexuality are of interest to people inside and outside the Christian churches. A massive exercise in social engineering is underway around the world and it is often difficult to discern how Christians might contribute to the debate in a way that will not simply be dismissed as traditionalist bigotry.

The Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission has spent two years reflecting upon the issues and has produced this little book as a resource for Christians who wish to understand what is happening and how they might respond, as well as an explanation to others of why Christians have found the debate and the way it has been conducted in the public arena deeply disturbing.

Written by the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission to address human sexuality and the 'Same Sex Marriage' Debate from a Biblical standpoint.

Paperback: 104 pages; **Publisher:** Anglican Press Australia (2015)

ISBN-13: 978-1-925041-60-6

More Perfect Union? Understanding same-sex Christian marriage, by Alan Wilson, Darton, Longman & Todd (2014)

In this important and timely book Alan Wilson argues that allowing gay people to marry is a moral purpose. Wilson says: 'I asked myself "what does God want for gay people?". After re-revisiting the Bible, and more importantly getting to know gay people of all types and varying backgrounds, he decided the answer was that God wants for them the same as everyone else - flourishing faith, hope and love, involvement and inclusion. Meanwhile, from a scientific perspective, *More Perfect Union?* asserts that homosexuality is part of a wide range of human sexual longing and expression, not an anomaly, a sickness, not merely a lifestyle choice. The vast majority of people Wilson encountered on his journey toward being in favour of same-sex marriage were not anti-gay, were 'just trying to love their neighbour as themselves', even if, in some cases, their heads lagged behind their hearts on the issue of gay marriage. The ultimate aim of this book is to help Christians unite head and heart in a fully positive response to gay people marrying, and to enable them to wholeheartedly rejoice in such union, in doing so shaking off the hangover of years of stereotyping, fear and discrimination about gay people.

Paperback: 160 pages; **Publisher:** Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd (26 Sept. 2014)
ISBN-10: 0232531250; **ISBN-13:** 978-0232531251

An Acceptable Sacrifice? Duncan Dormor and Jeremy Morris (eds.), SPCK (2007)

Here is an oasis in the desert of the Anglican debate . . . This book is rightly aimed at those who are unresolved on questions about homosexuality. Its contention that these questions are important but should not be church-dividing will ring true with many' Professor David Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge. '... an extremely useful and sympathetic guide for the ordinary lay or clerical reader who wants to learn more about the issue which seems to be pulling the Anglican Communion apart . . . ' David Jones, former Deputy Director of Oxfam and a member of General Synod. "An Acceptable Sacrifice?" The answer is simple: No. It is not acceptable for us to discriminate against our brothers and sisters on the basis of sexual orientation just as it was not acceptable for discrimination to exist on the basis of skin colour under Apartheid." Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

Paperback: 192 pages; **Publisher:** SPCK; 1st Edition (15 Feb. 2007)
ISBN-10: 0281058512; **ISBN-13:** 978-0281058518

Permanent, Faithful, Stable: Christian Same-sex Marriage, by Jeffrey John, Darton, Longham and Todd (2012)

Drawing on many years' personal and pastoral experience, Jeffrey John explores the meaning and context of the mentions of homosexuality in the Bible and also considers the moral arguments, before offering guidance to same-sex couples on forming a lasting, covenanted, monogamous relationship. Earlier editions of this book have become essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the theology of same-sex relationships in a

Christian context. It has been cited by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, as one of the most helpful books on the subject. This new edition has been updated to take account of the latest thinking on the issue. In a brand new Preface and Postscript, Jeffrey John speaks forthrightly about the Church of England's failure to move positively in support of same-sex marriage.

Paperback: 96 pages; **Publisher:** Darton, Longman & Todd (9 Aug. 2012)

ISBN-10: 0232529574; **ISBN-13:** 978-0232529579