

PRESS RELEASE

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Leyland United Reformed Church is pleased to announce that as of the 15th August it has become an approved venue for the celebration of civil partnerships. This will allow same-sex couples entering into a civil partnership, to celebrate their commitment to each other within Christian worship, following on from the legal signing of the register at the same venue.

The change in government legislation that allowed religious premises to become venues for civil partnerships has resulted in differing responses from each Christian denomination. At a national level in July the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church passed an enabling resolution to allow its congregations to do this, whilst protecting the rights of others to not do it.

Leyland United Reformed Church's approval is the first for church premises in Lancashire and only one of a handful in the North West.

Leyland United Reformed Church is committed to being an open and inclusive community and this decision follows on from many other steps. They have previously agreed for civil partnerships to be blessed within the church building. Also the congregation affirms the 'eight points' of Progressive Christianity and was part of the United Reformed Church's Radical Welcome campaign.

Couples wishing to explore celebrating their civil partnership at Leyland United Reformed Church can do so by contacting the minister directly or Lancashire County Council Registration Service.

Rev'd David Coaker said: 'As yet we have only celebrated one blessing of a civil partnership, after a couple approached me two-and-a-half years ago. My initial response was positive, but for it to be held within the church the members needed to decide. After discussion the members voted in favour, and three months later affirmed that decision and agreed for any future requests to be dealt with as a matter of course, as we do with weddings, baptisms and funerals. Those decisions, and their decision to apply to become an approved venue, have taken Leyland United Reformed Church to this point.'

He added: 'Personally I am delighted that the church made this decision as I believe it is a clear statement of their belief that everyone is valued, unique, and accepted as a fellow human being, and is welcome within Leyland United Reformed Church. For me, faith, trusting in God, is a personal and a community activity in which we explore, express, and engage in, our relationship with God. God's welcome is for all. It is a welcome grounded in love and acceptance. A welcome that is unconditional, but if we accept it then it becomes a challenge to ourselves to live it out. That challenge is discerned, individually and communally, as we engage with the Bible, Church teaching and tradition, the insights of science, and with our own consciences. I know that Christians within my own denomination, the wider Church, and even some within the congregation, take a very different stance and I respect the discernment that led them to it. All I hope is that they respect the discernment and the decisions that the members of Leyland United Reformed Church have taken.'

Notes to editors

1. United Reformed Church website: www.urc.org.uk
2. The 'eight points' of Progressive Christianity:
http://www.pcnbritain.org.uk/resources/The_Eight_Points.pdf
3. URC General Assembly's decision on Civil Partnerships:
<http://www.urc.org.uk/news/832-united-reformed-church-takes-historic-decisions-enabling-civil-partnerships-to-be-registered-in-its-churches.html>
4. Lancashire County Council Registration Service:
<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/acs/sites/registration/civil-partnerships/index.asp>
5. What is the United Reformed Church?

The United Reformed Church plays a dynamic and challenging part in the British Christian community, despite being one of the smaller mainstream denominations. It has brought together English Presbyterians, English, Welsh and Scottish Congregationalists, and members of the Churches of Christ, through unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000. Sixty-eight thousand people make up 1500 congregations, with nearly 700 ministers, paid and unpaid.

The United Reformed Church combines its commitment to the Reformed tradition with a passionate belief that all God's people should be one. It seeks to work with Christians of all traditions, and rejoices in being part of more than 400 Local Ecumenical Partnerships, with the Methodist Church and others. It is also committed to theological and cultural diversity. It has declared itself a multi-cultural church, rejoicing in the gifts of members from across the world and seeks to hold together a wide variety of theological understandings; the valuing of different insights helps the church understand the wonder of God.

Worldwide, more than 70 million Christians are members of the Reformed family of churches. They uphold the historic Trinitarian creeds of the church universal and find the supreme authority for their lives in the Word of God in the Bible, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They order their lives through councils of the church, where ministers and lay people together seek the mind of Christ.

Press contact

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