

# THE PARISH OF WEST KIRBY ST. BRIDGET WITH CALDY

## INCLUSIVE CHURCH SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024



“We believe in **inclusive church** – a church which **celebrates and affirms every person** and does not discriminate.

We will continue to challenge the church where it continues to discriminate against people on grounds of **disability**, **economic power**, **ethnicity**, **gender**, **gender identity**, **learning disability**, **mental health**, **neurodiversity**, or **sexuality**.

We believe in a Church which **welcomes and serves all people** in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.”

This Parish is proud to be registered with Inclusive Church: we display the IC Declaration (see front page) and we can be found at [inclusive-church.org](https://www.inclusive-church.org) by people searching for a Church which does not discriminate and campaigns for national change.

### **But isn't discrimination illegal?**

*The Church of England has exemptions under laws such as the Equality Act 2010, and is permitted to discriminate on the grounds of gender and sexuality.*

The General Synod, in a series of close hard-fought votes, has made some progress towards blessing same-sex unions, but there is still a way to go, and much opposition.

### **Same-sex marriage legislation**

It is not legally possible for same-sex couples to marry in the Church of England.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding/just-engaged/legal-requirements>

The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) commissioned overseers on 12 July 2024, at All Souls Langham Place, in London. The introduction of [Alternative Spiritual Oversight](#) (ASO) followed the General Synod decision in November 2023 to approve the bishops' proposals to change the position and practice of the Church of England with regards to sexual ethics and marriage, by blessing same sex couples as part of normal services. At a subsequent Synod meeting, standalone services of blessing for same sex couples received General Synod support and a timetable towards clergy same sex marriages was endorsed. As a result of these decisions, many clergy and PCCs have lost confidence in those bishops supporting change. [ceec.info](https://www.ceec.info)

More info at [inclusive-church.org](https://www.inclusive-church.org) [thinkinganglicans.org.uk](https://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk) [cofe-equal-marriage.org.uk](https://cofe-equal-marriage.org.uk) or read [The Church Times](#)

## ***What action is this Parish taking?***

- We publicise our inclusive welcome
- Our Rector would conduct same sex marriages if permitted, and has signed up at <https://cofe-equal-marriage.org.uk/clergy-marry-same-sex-couples/>
- We support the ordained ministry of women at all levels as equal to that of men, unlike many C of E parishes
- We take a contextual rather than literalist approach to the Bible in preaching and teaching
- We seek a more diverse representation in the various Church roles, making adjustments as necessary
- We seek to meet the needs of worshippers who have a range of disabilities; we have level access, are a [Sight Loss Friendly Church](#), and are working to provide an accessible toilet for St Bridget's Church
- We seek to enable people of all ages and abilities to take an active part in church life and experience life in all its fullness
- We are on the [Welcome Directory](#) of faith communities who welcome prison leavers
- We celebrate Inclusive Church Sunday each year
- We welcome all for baptism – the parents do not have to be married, heterosexual or already worshippers
- We submitted inclusive views to the C of E's *Living in Love and Faith* project, advocating an end to discrimination against LGBT+ people.

## ***Celebrating ten years***

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, was passed on 17 July 2013, and the first marriages of same sex couples took place on Saturday 29 March 2014.

Since then, other UK Christian Churches including The Scottish Episcopal Church, The Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland have changed their rules and perform same-sex marriages. But not yet the Church of England.



## ***What more should we do in this Parish?***

- Please suggest how we could meet needs better
- Please let us know if you feel excluded
- We realise that our congregations, activities and committees do not look very diverse. We still have some way to go, but we have made some progress and are trying to do better.

Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of West Kirby:  
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