

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **I Didn't Leave the Church — the Church Left Me**

**Cllr Dan McDonald**

**“This is why I stopped going to church.”**

I am speaking out as a gay man of faith in response to the **Church of England**'s decision to halt further work on *Living in Love and Faith*.

I am angry — not performatively, not rhetorically — but because this decision causes real harm.

It is not a neutral pause. It is not an administrative adjustment. It is yet another moment where LGBTQ+ lives are placed on hold while the Church debates whether we are worthy of full recognition.

For years, LGBTQ+ people have been told to wait. Wait for discernment. Wait for consensus. Wait for courage.

Each delay carries a cost.

This one tells loving couples that their relationships are still considered second-class. It tells young LGBTQ+ Christians that their place in the Church is uncertain. And it tells those discerning vocation that honesty about who they are may close doors forever.

This is why so many of us leave.

I did not stop going to church because I lost my faith. I stopped because the Church repeatedly made clear that my dignity, my love, and my integrity were negotiable.

Being endlessly discussed without being fully recognised is not inclusion — it is exclusion by delay.

I am tired of watching hope offered and then withdrawn. Tired of statements about welcome that are not matched by action. Tired of a Church that preaches love while rationing it.

Let me be clear: this is not about special treatment. It is about equal dignity. Love should not need permission. Faith should not require self-erasure.

There are clergy and parishes who live this truth every day, offering inclusive ministry with courage and compassion.

They show that full inclusion is not a threat to faith — it is an expression of it. But they are doing this despite institutional hesitation, not because of leadership from the top.

I did not walk away from faith.

The Church walked away from people like me.

And until the Church is willing to stop debating our existence and start affirming our lives, it will continue to lose people — not because they lack belief, but because they refuse to keep shrinking themselves to fit an institution that will not fully see them.

I've had enough of the constant attacks on the Pride flag in Kent — the sneering, the vandalism, the deliberate misrepresentation of what it stands for. And when the Church of England then chooses this moment to halt progress on inclusion, it compounds that harm.

It tells LGBTQ+ people that even our symbols of hope are up for debate, and even our lives can be put on pause. I am tired of defending my right to exist in public spaces, civic spaces, and now — once again — faith spaces too.

**ENDS**

