

2020.01.21

19 Deputy M. Tadier of the Dean regarding marriage by same-sex couples in the Church of England: (OQ.20/2020)

What progress is being made towards allowing same-sex couples in Jersey to be married by the Church of England?

The Very Reverend M.R. Keirle, B.A., Dean of Jersey:

I thank the Deputy for his question. He has just got it in, in time, I think. The simple answer is that there have been no developments in this area. The Deputy will know that the Marriage and Civil Status (Jersey) Law 2001 revised by this Assembly in 2017 provides under part 1, Article 7(1) and (2) a mechanism for those who conduct marriage under religious rites not to be compelled by any means, including by the enforcement of a statutory or legal requirement, to take a marriage of 2 people of the same sex. The Deputy will also understand that there may be a very wide variety of views on this subject within the Church of England and within Jersey itself. But he may or may not be aware that in matters of doctrine, which his question encompasses with regard to human sexuality, the Church of England here in Jersey has no legal powers to revise or amend the official teaching of the Church of England; to make changes like that is not within my gift. That is entirely a matter for its bishops and the governing body, the general synod. I would add however that the bishops of the Church of England are currently producing a report on the subject of human sexuality, which I believe will be published later this year, which may bring greater clarity to their position and indeed to the Deputy's question.

2.19.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Dean for his answer. The Dean is obviously in a privileged position being both a Member of this Assembly and the head of the Church of England and its representative in Jersey. Certainly for what concerns us in this Assembly with regard to same-sex marriage is to do with the law that we make and the law that we can change. Could the Dean confirm that, not only does our law not compel the Church of England clergyman to conduct a wedding, but our law expressly forbids that even a clergyman who wants to conduct a same-sex marriage is not allowed to do so under our law and does he think that this could be changed?

The Dean of Jersey:

I can confirm that no clergyman can be compelled to take a marriage of people of the same sex. The second part of the question please, sorry?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, as I understand it, a clergyman is not allowed to perform a same-sex marriage under our law even if he or she wanted to do so.

The Dean of Jersey:

That is a very good question and that applies specifically to the Church of England, other denominations are at liberty to do so if their particular governing bodies or central assemblies decide that to be the case. But at the moment that is correct.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That brings question time to an end.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That leaves 2 questions to be asked. Could I ask that those Ministers circulate their answers to the questions 20 and 21 so that we can know what the results are?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Will the Ministers in question confirm that they will do so?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Will do so.

[Please note that the Minister for Health and Social Services subsequently provided the response below to the oral question from Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Question:

Given the goal of improving the access to affordable primary care in, or close to, people's homes, as outlined in the Jersey Care Model, what proposals does the Minister have under consideration to increase the numbers of skilled professionals in place, such as G.P.s, community nurses and social care assistants?: (OQ.8/2020)

Answer:

I intended to respond by saying the question appeared to assume that the Island would need to increase the number of professional workers employed in the delivery of the Jersey Care Model. This is not necessarily so. We anticipate that the work location of many of the professionals involved may change e.g. services presently delivered in institutional settings such as the hospital, or care homes, may instead be delivered in GP surgeries, community hubs, or the homes of patients. As mentioned earlier in the sitting, plans are currently being tested. The work will include the development of a workforce plan, that will explore what resources we currently have and how skills might be moved across the system to ensure the right skills are deployed in the right place. If gaps are identified, the plan would set out how those could be managed, possibly by further training, or recruitment.]

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Yes.

[Please note that it was subsequently decided by the Deputy Chief Minister that the response that would have been given to the oral question from Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Further to reported comments of the Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the site selection process for the new hospital, will the Chief Minister clarify the purpose of the current consultation about the site selection and will he advise when the final sites for consideration will be decided?) was covered by the Statement and follow up questions at item 5 of the current meeting.]

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am grateful for that confirmation. We now move to questions to Ministers with notice, a period of 30 minutes and the first period is the Minister for Home Affairs.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Would it be permissible for the Assembly to allow an extra 10 minutes or so to try to get the final 2 oral questions dealt with and then we start afresh with questions without notice when we come back at 2.15 p.m.?

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, it is not possible to extend the period of question time. It is possible to extend the period for the questions that you will be facing later on today, but not for these questions.