

Grassroots Church movement calls for inclusiveness  
PRESS RELEASE

Sunday 10th August 2003

For immediate release



The call for an inclusive Church will be heard loud and clear at a mass meeting to be held at St Mary's Church, Putney on Monday 11th August 2003. During the meeting an online petition will be launched. The meeting is an occasion for Christians to express their views over issues such as the Jeffrey John debacle and the Church's resistance to women bishops. The organizers have been overwhelmed by the numbers of people wanting to attend. Inclusive Church is the result of that response.

Giles Fraser, the vicar of St Mary's Church and one of the organizers of the meeting, said: 'The church is not full of bigots. Debates in the church over homosexuality or women bishops are too easily hijacked by conservatives claiming to speak for a majority of Christians. Inclusive Church is a chance for regular church-goers everywhere to say that they believe the Church must be inclusive. We want to see thousands of different voices uniting behind that belief.'

The meeting will begin at 10.30am with a Eucharist. During the service there will be an 'open mike' session during which people will be invited to express their views. A number of senior Anglican clergy will be present, including Deans and Archdeacons. Bishops have not been invited to safeguard the grassroots nature of the meeting.

The meeting began as a group of friends from Southwark, London and Oxford who were increasingly worried about the future direction of the Church of England. Others asked if they could come including individuals from the evangelical wing of the Church. It snowballed very quickly. A number of organizations including LGCM, Changing Attitudes, Affirming Catholicism, MCU, GRAS and the Open Synod group are sending representatives.

Inclusive Church contains a Statement of Belief written by a group of Oxford theologians. The statement expresses the strong conviction that the Church is for all people regardless of sex, race or sexual orientation. It calls on the Church to act justly, particularly in the appointment of clergy and bishops regardless of sex, race or sexual orientation. Visitors to the website, be they individuals, PCCs (Parochial Church Councils) or other organizations, are invited to register their support.