

# Attitudes Towards Queer Christians in Oxford Churches

## **Trigger Warning:**

**Homophobia and transphobia in the context of religious teaching and practice**

### **Why this project?**

For so many LGBTQ+ people in Oxford, there is a crippling fear and anxiety at simply setting foot in a Church building. We have consistently seen our friends and colleagues deeply hurt because their LGBTQ+ identity is rejected by the Churches they call home.

It is worrying that, for so long, students in Oxford have unwittingly entered the life of Churches where they are initially welcomed, only to find that their LGBTQ+ identity is not. We watch as LGBTQ+ students are drawn into these churches, only to encounter theology, policy, and practice which oppose their queer identities and ask for repentance of their gender identity or sexuality.

Historically, there is a lack of clarity to which Oxford Churches will affirm LGBTQ+ identities and relationships, and which will not. This has left LGBTQ+ people in the unknown, and feeling that they cannot access the Church confidently. Although we wish that every church would be safe and welcoming for everyone, including LGBTQ+ people, we realise that some churches do not, or cannot, offer this. It's only fair that a queer person should be able to know exactly what a church believes before joining that community. This includes what the church leadership believes, teaches, and practises, and what kind of pastoral engagement they will experience as LGBTQ+ people. This clarity is what this project hopes to achieve.

### **The Theology**

From the position of LGBTQ+ people of faith who hold affirming, inclusive theology and pastoral practice, the definition of those who 'Hold to the traditional beliefs of the Church of England', can include numerous different churches and denominations. Importantly, an affirming theological perspective of the 'Traditional View on Marriage', is that it is not in fact a form of ancient orthodoxy, but is in most cases, an example of systematic homophobic theology from post-WWII USA.

The dark shadow of the 'Traditional View on Marriage' has to be acknowledged as the demonization, pathologizing, and stigmatising of all LGBTQIA+ people. From our perspective, this stance is rooted in inaccurate and harmful theology, translation, interpretation, and understanding of scripture. Being supported by a false pseudoscience extorted from psychology, such non-affirming theology resolves to either convert people of their natural and inherent identity, or to inflict celibacy upon them. All of this is rooted in a fundamentalist and literalist use of the Bible: specifically, the well-known 'lobber verses'<sup>1</sup> which are used to justify the belief that homosexuality is sinful, and worthy of hell.

For those who hold to such non-affirming theology, this justifies their role as 'saviours' to LGBTQ+ people, and all their attempts to convert, cure, or heal us. Through their theology of eternal separation on the basis of same-sex relationships, this justifies to them a lack of affirmation for LGBTQ+ identity in the church. Non-affirming theology being taught or believed leads to exclusion of LGBTQ+ identity from the life of the church. Given that this theology is often hidden by churches that subscribe to it, this project aims to bring to light the places where queer students may be at risk of encountering such teaching.

### **About the Project**

This project hopes to give some transparency towards the wide range of beliefs found in Oxford churches, and offer LGBTQ+ people the resources to make informed decisions about where they want to go to Church. For each church, we have summarised information available to us which indicate what beliefs the Church holds and the sort of experience that might be expected.

We know many LGBTQ+ people who are broken, deeply wounded; whose lives have been shattered by the theology and pastoral practices of some city churches. There is a need for accountability to lead such churches and leaders to repent.

We know of many victims of conversion practices, in this city, and even amongst the project team. Most churches want to be seen as 'having moved on from the days of conversion practises', without going through the Godly process of reflection, contemplation, repentance, confession and apology, and restitution to the victims. The stories and testimonies we share here are from victims of spiritual abuse in some of the city churches, and the ongoing religious trauma and mental, spiritual, and physical conditions they continue to suffer.

This project seeks to honour all who have suffered trauma, in some cases complex or compounded PTSD, as a result of spiritual abuse because they are LGBTQ+ people of faith. It also seeks to stop this ever happening again, by giving LGBTQ+ the tools to make informed decisions about what church to attend.

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 6 v9, Ephesians 4 v17-19, 5 v3-5, Revelation 21 v7-8

Each profile has been created by a small team of student researchers, and will provide an **overview of the evidence** that show the beliefs and teachings of that Church. It will also include whether there has been a **response to our self-report survey**, to inform our rating, and will include any first hand **anonymous testimonies** of experiences at that church. All of these factors have been used to inform a rating, which will help quickly summarise the most important points.

We have included around 30 Churches in Oxford, the ones we see as most frequented by students. We are hoping this will grow to include more Churches in and around Oxford in the future. **This is also a working document**; if any evidence changes, we hope to update this report as soon as possible.

**Disclaimer:**

*All ratings have been made based on consideration of the team, which is made up of 11 members, either based on evidence which has been made publicly available by churches, or from collected personal experiences.*

**Categorisation**

We will be using a traffic light system to categorise churches. This will take the form of 5 categories, with 1 being the least inclusive of LGBTQ+ people, and 5 being the most inclusive. These categories have been designed through the Honest Churches toolkit, made by the Student Christian Movement. Each category is described in more detail below.

**1: (Red)**

*This is probably a church where there is public teaching calling homosexuality sinful. They are likely to use the 'lobber passages' to argue that any form of homosexual sex (within a same-sex marriage or otherwise) is a form of sexual immorality and are likely to use this as a means of arguing for celibacy or 'conversion' to a heterosexual 'lifestyle'. It is also likely that trans and non-binary people are not openly affirmed. You might find people in this church who would express a 'love the sinner, hate the sin' approach. There may be people attending this church who would describe themselves as same sex attracted and celibate. LGBTQ+ people may be asked to repent of any relationships before becoming members of the church. Heteronormativity is likely to be seen as the only life sanctified by God. No one drives through a red light without knowing they are taking an extreme risk. We believe, for some people, especially freshers and students, it may mean a high risk of spiritual abuse.*

**2: (Red)**

*In this church diversity of sexuality is probably rarely mentioned. A heteronormative approach to life is likely to be emphasised with cis male/female marriages celebrated as community events, and illustrations*

from cis and straight family life being the norm. When pressed, leaders are likely to say that they have 'orthodox views' on sexuality by which they probably mean non-affirming of LGBTQ+ relationships, though they may affirm the existence of LGBTQ+ people. There is often an emphasis on welcome in the church, but LGBTQ+ people may find that that welcome does not extend to their queer identity or their relationships. There is an expectation that LGBTQ+ people will either live quiet celibate lives or will change to develop heteronormative/cis gendered relationships and identities. There may be affirming people within the congregation. No openly LGBTQ+ people are in leadership unless they are publicly celibate. No one drives through a red light without knowing they are at risk. We believe, for some people, especially freshers and students, there may be a risk of spiritual abuse.

### **3: (Amber)**

In this church it is likely that sexuality and relationships of any kind are not mentioned, although heterosexuality and cis gendered experience is the passively assumed norm. The minister may be personally either unsure of their theological stance on matters relating to LGBTQ+ people or they may be personally affirming when asked but disinclined to speak publicly about it. Individuals or couples who are LGBTQ+ are likely to be welcomed personally, some members of the congregation will particularly welcome them with enthusiasm. There may be individuals who complain to the minister about their presence or make it known they have a problem. It is unlikely the congregation will be generally au fait with current inclusive terminology but there will generally be no intent to cause offence. There may be other LGBTQ+ identifying people in the congregation or there may not. There is nothing preventing access to leadership, but it is unlikely a newcomer will see LGBTQ+ people in such roles. When people drive through an amber light, they have to ask questions and be cautious because this is a transitioning stage, there might be some risks to driving.

### **4: (Green)**

This is a church where there is at least some public support for LGBTQ+ people and probably a specific public welcome. Leaders are likely to be prepared to voice their affirmation and they may occasionally preach or write a blog or magazine article to explain their theological position. There may well be LGBTQ+ people in the congregation and in positions of leadership. Agencies and resources which offer LGBTQ+ people support and allyship may be linked to and promoted. There may also be members of the congregation or assistant leadership who are unsure or non-affirming. This church may specifically welcome them as part of the diverse family of faith. This means that an LGBTQ+ person or couple may occasionally meet opposition or comments that are uninformed, but the culture of the church as a whole is welcoming from a theological and

*personal standpoint. Illustrations and modelling may still tend towards heteronormativity but will be likely to be consciously minimised. Driving through a green light, you can be more certain that the road will be clear and safe to drive.*

### **5: (Green)**

*This is probably a church which has internalised a queer identity, it may be that a large number of LGBTQ+ people attend or even that they started or lead the church. Straight and cis people attend as part of the diversity of the church rather than the assumed norm. If someone were to speak against inclusivity, others would be very likely to defend it. LGBTQ+ relationships and milestones are publicly celebrated. Agencies and resources which offer LGBTQ+ people support and allyship are almost certainly linked to and promoted. Modelling of including behaviours and language is normative. Driving through a green light, you can be far more certain that the road will be clear and safe to drive.*

Whilst we've taken this toolkit from Honest Churches, that is an entirely separate project and we want to make it clear that we have added a different meaning to their scale for the purpose of our own project.

Any church that this project has identified as category 1, is so labelled because it openly holds to this harmful, non-affirming theology. They may also be deemed to be hiding this theology from students in attempts to win and convert them, under the guise of 'Everybody Welcome' marketing.

If a church has been designated 'Red' by the project team, it is because we believe there is a high risk of experiencing spiritual harm. This may happen in the form of coercive counsel, prayer, and fellowship, all of which may place pressure on students to renounce their identity, commit to a life of celibacy, or be refused any significant role in the life of the church.

*Until churches and leadership teams are no longer hiding their theology and pastoral policy regarding the discipleship of LGBTQIA+, they cannot be considered safe for everyone.*

## The Churches

### **Christian Life Centre**

300 Cowley Rd, Oxford OX4 2AF

<https://www.clcoxford.co.uk/>

#### Overview

- Sees homosexuality as a choice.<sup>2</sup>
- Recent teaching actively opposes LGBTQ+ identities and relationships.<sup>3</sup>
- Scriptural response to same sex relationships: A "detestable sin" that "threatens the human race". Committed to "sexual purity".<sup>4</sup>
- Featured as part of Love Oxford Students website, which appears to require churches to reject LGBTQ+ relationships as part of their theology to be recommended.<sup>5</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

#### Rating

1 - Christian Life Centre's (CLC) sermon on the 'Scriptural response to same-sex relationships' in April, 2023, publically teaches that homosexuality is sinful. Although there is an emphasis on loving welcome in the church, this may not extend towards those 'choosing to practise' homosexuality, as it might be described. For this reason, CLC is ranked at a 1.

### **Grace Church Cowley**

Oxford Rd, Oxford OX4 2ES

<https://www.gracechurchcowley.org/>

#### Overview

- Teaches that same-sex relationships are sinful and 'against God's pattern for marriage', just like any other sexual sin, such as adultery.<sup>6</sup>
- Teaches opposition against the proposition for the Church of England to bless same-sex marriage.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Pastor Paul Grady, Scriptural Response to Same Sex Relationships | 23.04.2023  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNtvxEhvHHU>)

<sup>3</sup> Above

<sup>4</sup> Above

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.loveoxfordstudents.co.uk/find-a-church>

<sup>6</sup> Marriage - washed, raised, joined  
(<https://www.gracechurchcowley.org/gcc/talk/marriage-washed-raised-joined/>)

<sup>7</sup> Marriage - washed, raised, joined  
(<https://www.gracechurchcowley.org/gcc/talk/marriage-washed-raised-joined/>)

- This church is governed by St Ebbe's PCC, which holds similar beliefs on the sinfulness of same-sex relationships and gender transition (see St Ebbes report for more information).<sup>8</sup>
- Apologised for not being able to respond to our survey.

### Rating

1 - Grace Church Cowley has a 'love the sinner, hate the sin' approach to teaching, where same-sex relationships are seen as sinful. The teaching advocates for celibacy when 'same-sex attracted'. You might receive prayer at this church to help to stop the temptation of engaging in a same-sex relationship. Governed by St Ebbes, another church in Oxford which holds similar views, Grace Church Cowley is rated at a 1.

### **Emmanuel Church Oxford (New Frontiers)**

Oxford Spires Academy, Glanville Rd, Oxford OX4 2AU

<http://www.emmanueloxford.org/>

### Overview

- Member of Catalyst and Evangelical Alliance<sup>9</sup>.
- Becoming a member of the Evangelical Alliance would involve committing to their stated principle to 'oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship'<sup>10</sup> and barring LGBTQ+ people in such relationships from leadership.
- A slightly outdated sermon (2017, uploaded 2019)<sup>11</sup> emphasises that 'God's community, the church, should not accept sexual impurity as the norm ... it dishonours God and it discredits the gospel'.
- In the above sermon, LGBTQ+ identity or relationships are not explicitly mentioned, however, considering their membership to Evangelical Alliance, it is implied that LGBTQ+ relationships would be seen as 'sexual impurity'.
- Another sermon in this series (2017, uploaded 2019)<sup>12</sup> states that 'sexual compromise is not (morally neutral)' and emphasises how much 'sexual purity' matters before marriage - which is only ever referred to between heterosexual couples.

---

<sup>8</sup> Vision and Values, <https://www.gracechurchcowley.org/about/values/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.emmanueloxford.org/catalyst>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/publications/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality.cfm>

<sup>11</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/emmanueloxford/why-sexual-purity-matters-matt-partridge?in=emmanueloxford/sets/a-beautiful-mess-ii>

<sup>12</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/emmanueloxford/why-our-bodies-matter-matt-partridge?in=emmanueloxford/sets/a-beautiful-mess-ii>

## Ranking

2 - There is no public teaching against LGBTQ+ identities or relationships, however, marriage is only ever referred to in a heterosexual setting and sexual purity is preached on. Being a member of Evangelical Alliance suggests that this church will likely not affirm LGBTQ+ relationships, and so is rated at a 2.

## **Headington Baptist Church**

78 Old High St, Headington, Oxford OX3 9HW

<https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/>

## Overview

- The Minister of Heading Baptist Church, Chris Band, who is still minister today, in 2018 described the biblical definition for marriage as 'heterosexual'.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2018, Andy Robinson, a visiting speaker, describes Jesus's definition of marriage as of a 'man and a woman', and sees the gay identity as opposed to identity in Jesus.<sup>14</sup>
- Safeguarding document makes various references to sexuality and gender. Including understanding that discrimination against a person 'because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality or disability.' is a form of abuse.<sup>15</sup>
- Recognises that forced/honour marriages are a form of abuse for which LGB people are more likely to be at risk ("The motivation may include the desire to control unwanted behaviour or sexuality."). The document has quite strong anti-discrimination policies.<sup>16</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

## Rating

2 - Headington Baptist Church has a history of defining biblical marriage as purely heterosexual. This evidence is quite outdated (from 2018), and considering their robust anti-discrimination policies, views may have changed since then. At the very least, Headington Baptist Church is overwhelmingly silent on issues of sexuality in recent years. Although any LGBTQ+ congregation will be constitutionally safeguarded by anti-discrimination policies, it is unclear what beliefs an LGBTQ+ member should expect to encounter in teaching.

---

<sup>13</sup><https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/hbc-sermons/archive/?preacher=0&service=0&book=&series=66&date=&enddate=&title=marriage&sortby=m.datetime&dir=desc>

<sup>14</sup><https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/hbc-sermons/archive/?preacher=0&service=0&book=&series=66&date=&enddate=&title=marriage&sortby=m.datetime&dir=desc>

<sup>15</sup>[https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HBC\\_Safeguarding\\_Policy\\_And\\_Procedures\\_2020.pdf](https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HBC_Safeguarding_Policy_And_Procedures_2020.pdf)

<sup>16</sup>[https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HBC\\_Safeguarding\\_Policy\\_And\\_Procedures\\_2020.pdf](https://hbc-oxford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HBC_Safeguarding_Policy_And_Procedures_2020.pdf)



## Hope Vineyard Church Oxford

4, The Square Templars Square Shopping Centre, Oxford OX4 3XD

<https://hopeoxford.org/>

### Overview

- They are a Vineyard Church, and a member of the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>17</sup> Becoming a member of the Alliance would involve committing to their stated principle to 'oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship' and barring LGBTQ+ people in such relationships from leadership.<sup>18</sup>
- Featured as part of Love Oxford Students website, which may require churches to theologically reject LGBTQ+ relationships to be recommended on the site as a basis of faith.<sup>19</sup>
- Strong safeguarding policy, which includes reference to 'gender and gender identity' and 'sexual orientation'<sup>20</sup>
- Online talks on 'Singleness, sex, and marriage': briefly mentions same-sex relationship and gender but does not go into detail, the rest of the talk enforces that sexual intimacy is designed for marriage (which is only possible between a man and women)<sup>21</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

### Ranking

2 - Hope Vineyard Church is connected to the Vineyard Church Network, which is a part of the Evangelical Alliance. This suggests that there may be some opposition to LGBTQ+ relationships, or a 'love the sinner, hate the sin' approach in the Church. There are a few resources that suggest they want their church to be inclusive, but it is unclear whether this is just in terms of race and ethnicity. Overwhelmingly, Hope Vineyard is silent on issues of sexuality in direct teaching, but possibly holds hidden views opposing same-sex relationships, so is rated at a 2.

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://hopeoxford.org/im-new/#vineyardchurches>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/publications/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality.cfm>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.loveoxfordstudents.co.uk/find-a-church>

<sup>20</sup> <https://hopeoxford.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Hope-Vineyard-Safeguarding-Every-one-Policy-Version-July-2023.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://youtu.be/KaEhvInXaZg?list=PLwdlczhsex9wd4aq-jdugDPrtR03sLoe>

## Magdalen Road Church

The Old Schoolhouse, Hertford St, Oxford OX4 3AJ

<https://www.mrc-oxford.org/>

### Overview

- Affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance who 'oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship', and reject anyone in these relationships from leadership.<sup>22</sup>
- Also affiliated with the Fellowship of Evangelical Independent Churches (FEIC) which states its belief that 'sexual activity is a gift to be enjoyed only within (heterosexual) marriage and that, outside of this setting, it is sinful'.<sup>23</sup>
- FEIC affiliated churches and Pastors would not 'in good conscience, be able to perform, bless or host same-sex marriage or wedding ceremonies'.<sup>24</sup>
- 2008 teaching sees homosexuality as a 'behaviour' that is 'wrong from a Christian point of view. To engage in homosexual sex is a sin according to scripture and the church must discipline its membership accordingly'.<sup>25</sup>
- Sermon (2012) on Romans 1 refers to same-sex intimacy as 'forms of dysfunctional sex'.<sup>26</sup>
- Sermon on gender (2016) refers to gender identity in recent years as defined by 'inconsistency and confusion', reinforces teaching on 'two sexes: male and female' based on 'the physical nature of bodies', 'if we play fast and loose with gender then we are undoing what God has done, and therefore distorting the image of God we are made to reflect'.<sup>27</sup>
- Sermon (2018) on Leviticus which 'flatly forbids homosexual intercourse' but the talk does not teach directly on sexuality.<sup>28</sup>
- Sermon (2020) on 1 Timothy 1 implies that people who 'practice homosexuality' are 'sinners'.<sup>29</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

### Ranking

1 - The affiliations that Magdalen Road church hold suggest a 'love the sinner, hate the sin' approach and that would not accept LGBTQ+ relationships into the heart of the church or to participate in leadership. There is historical evidence of explicit teaching against same-sex relationships and transgender identity, which continues implicitly into recent years. In this case, Magdalen Road is rated at a 1.

---

<sup>22</sup><https://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/publications/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality.cfm>

<sup>23</sup><https://fieic.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage>

<sup>24</sup><https://fieic.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage>

<sup>25</sup> <https://mrc-oxford.org/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=38773>

<sup>26</sup>[https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file\\_id=105787](https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file_id=105787)

<sup>27</sup>[https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file\\_id=173538](https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file_id=173538)

<sup>28</sup>[https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file\\_id=225028](https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file_id=225028)

<sup>29</sup>[https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file\\_id=254673](https://mrc-oxford.org/Media/PlayMedia.aspx?file_id=254673)

## **New Road Baptist Church**

14 Bonn Square, Oxford OX1 1LQ

<http://newroad.org.uk/>

### Overview

- Registered for same-sex marriage<sup>30</sup> and affirms LGBTQ+ relationships in teaching.<sup>31</sup>
- Includes 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity in inclusivity statement.'<sup>32</sup>
- Part of the inclusive church network, which commits to inclusivity for all LGBTQ+ people and other marginalised groups, and works towards their full-affirmation and acceptance in all denominations.<sup>33</sup>
- Works with the local branch of the affirming organisation the Student Christian Movement (SCM).<sup>34</sup>
- Member of Affirming Ministers Prayer Breakfast.
- Has hosted Pride Blessing services<sup>35</sup> and Transgender Day of Remembrance services.<sup>36</sup>

### Ranking

4 - New Road Baptist Church has a clearly inclusive and affirming standpoint, with evidence of some LGBTQ+ leadership. There is an active engagement with LGBTQ+ organisations and affirming churches in Oxford. They are also committed to transparency, and teach on LGBTQ+ lives and relationships occasionally. The rating given to New Road Baptist Church is 4.

## **Oxford Bible Church**

Cheney Ln, Headington, Oxford OX3 7QH

<https://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/>

### Overview

- Describes its own stance as 'love the sinner, hate the sin' and believes that 'Homosexuality is consistently condemned by the Bible as sin' that 'goes against nature'.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>[https://www.newroad.org.uk/Articles/634246/Decision\\_on\\_Same.aspx](https://www.newroad.org.uk/Articles/634246/Decision_on_Same.aspx)

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LA0tm0pfNa0&t=1s>

<sup>32</sup>[https://www.newroad.org.uk/Groups/358621/Mission\\_and\\_Values.aspx](https://www.newroad.org.uk/Groups/358621/Mission_and_Values.aspx)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.inclusive-church.org/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.movement.org.uk/>

<sup>35</sup><https://www.facebook.com/104754029615928/posts/pfbid02nYh9mMpsd5of5FoUdGFQsJQCmwo1vy1KmbSgPnNnvTLVkmDolhPssgqUkvatTBBUI/?app=fbl>

<sup>36</sup><https://www.facebook.com/100067224772779/posts/pfbid03UBisBYDf2BsXsY84hn2QqdnhquY4W2i7AfRjHzrY3i2KatRzKCsUEsW2NZUeH5pl/?app=fbl>

<sup>37</sup><https://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/index.php/teachings/hot-potatoes/2296-is-homosexuality-a-sin>

- Expected to repent of homosexuality as a requirement for becoming a member of the church, listed as part of their 'membership standards'.<sup>38</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

## Ranking

1 - Oxford Bible Church clearly proclaims its view against homosexual relationships, and sees celibacy and repentance as a requirement to become a member of the Church. This is a church where there appears to be teaching against LGBTQ+ relationships. This means that it receives a rating of 1.

## **Oxford Community Church (OCC)**

The King's Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

<http://oxford.occ.org.uk/>

## Overview

- Affiliated with Evangelical Alliance<sup>39</sup> who 'oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship', and reject anyone in these relationships from leadership.<sup>40</sup>
- Featured as part of Love Oxford Students website, which may require churches to theologically reject LGBTQ+ relationships to be recommended on the site as a basis of faith.<sup>41</sup>
- Under 'Vision and Values', a 'key practice in the Life of OCC' includes 'pursuing Godly sexuality'.<sup>42</sup> This includes a link to Evangelical Alliance's response to homosexuality, where they state their belief that homosexual relationships are sinful, and are 'inconsistent with faithful church membership'.<sup>43</sup>
- Teaches marriage is 'between man and woman' as part of 'God's original plan', in a sermon in 2017.<sup>44</sup>
- Continuing conversation with our survey.

---

<sup>38</sup><https://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/index.php/books/church-handbook/712-chapter-4-membership-standards-responsibilities-and-commitments>

<sup>39</sup> <https://oxford.occ.org.uk/connections>

<sup>40</sup><https://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/publications/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality.cfm>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.loveoxfordstudents.co.uk/find-a-church>

<sup>42</sup> <https://oxford.occ.org.uk/visionandvalues>

<sup>43</sup><https://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/publications/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality.cfm>

<sup>44</sup><https://oxford.occ.org.uk/event/2017-05-28-why-does-god-care-about-my-behaviour-and-sex-life>

## Ranking

1 - On their website, OCC directs attention to an affiliation with Evangelical Alliance and echoes their attitudes towards LGBTQ+ relationships. Those in same-sex relationships would not be allowed into leadership positions and may feel pressured to 'pursue Godly sexuality'. This gives OCC a rating of 1.

## **Oxford Intercollegiate Christian Union (OICCU)**

<https://www.oiccu.org/>

### Overview

- Reports on OICCU suggest that this group has a non-affirming view of homosexuality, and believes that marriage should only be between a man and a woman.<sup>45</sup>
- In November 2020, OICCU deleted comments from their instagram page that recommended queer-affirming churches.<sup>46</sup> This was followed by a statement explaining their partnership with 'love Oxford Students' which recommends churches with a 'high view of Bible teaching', as they explain. All the churches they recommended here, that are included in this document, have been rated as non-affirming of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships in our findings.<sup>47</sup>
- In an investigation by The Oxford Student, out of 14 speakers from 2019-20, 8 had ties to 'anti-LGBTQ+ organisations', inviting no affirming speakers.<sup>48</sup> This included speakers with links to the Zacharias Trust, who describe homosexual desire as a 'sin', 'not what God originally intended' and 'leads people to destruction' and Christian Concern, who have called to protect children from the 'transgender agenda'. Both organisations advocate that sexuality can be changed through religion/ prayer.<sup>49</sup>
- In investigations by The Oxford Student, testimonies from students cite serious mental health issues as a result of their interaction with OICCU and associated churches.<sup>50</sup>
- More recently, an anonymous testimony<sup>51</sup> says there was some explicitly non-affirming teaching on LGBTQ+ identity and relationships at events

---

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/11/06/102923/>,  
<https://www.loveoxfordstudents.co.uk/find-a-church>,  
<https://www.oiccu.org/copy-of-churches>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/11/06/102923/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/11/06/102923/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/12/23/the-problem-with-oiccu/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/12/23/the-problem-with-oiccu/>,  
<https://christianconcern.com/ccevents/truth-in-science-11-nov-2020/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/11/06/102923/>

<https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/12/23/the-problem-with-oiccu/>

<sup>51</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

week 2023, in the Q+A section following the talk 'Is Christianity a hindrance to justice and equality?' by Rebecca McLaughlin.<sup>52</sup>

- An anonymous testimony states “as an openly queer fresher, I was not welcomed by those at OICCU. I was left alone and vulnerable, not yet understanding why I was not included”.<sup>53</sup>
- Anonymous testimony states that “students have to agree with non-affirming views on LGBTQ+ matters in order to be on the OICCU committee”, while another explains “OICCU have an expectation that, at some point on your Christian journey, you will need to repent of homosexuality, and remain celibate.”<sup>54</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

### Rating

1 - OICCU does not align itself with any affirming theology or churches, instead presenting a non-affirming theology and practice towards LGBTQ+ matters as the only option for a ‘high view of bible teaching’. Events and hosted speakers have actively preached against LGBTQ+ identity and relationships, and students have been consequently hurt. There is a high possibility that OICCU would support conversion practices. OICCU receives a rating of 1.

## **Oxford Oratory Church of St Aloysius Gonzaga**

25 Woodstock Rd, Oxford OX2 6HA

<https://www.oxfordoratory.org.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of the Catholic Church.
- No teaching on LGBTQ+ people or relationships could be found online.
- Did not respond to our survey.
- Anonymous testimony suggests that this is “a conservative church in every regard” and stated that one of the priests in 2020 shared a petition opposing LGBTQ+ education in primary school to an email list.<sup>55</sup>
- The testimony also says that booklets of repentance were given out which include homosexuality as a sin to consider.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDzYB1La6Lc> (Q+A section not included in this link)

<sup>53</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action

<sup>54</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action

<sup>55</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>56</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

## Ranking

2 - Anonymous testimony suggests a history of teaching against LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. There may not often be discussion of this topic, but church members may expect to encounter materials or attitudes that oppose LGBTQ+ relationships. This church is rated a 2.

### **Oxford Presbyterian Church**

18 St Michael's St, Oxford OX1 2DU

<http://www.oxfordpres.co.uk/>

## Overview

- Part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which defines marriage as 'between one man and one woman'.<sup>57</sup>
- In 2022, Minister, Andy Young, signed the open letter responding to the Government's proposals of a ban on conversion therapy. The letter expresses concern at areas of Christianity becoming criminalised through a conversion therapy ban. The letter states that 'internal desires to commit sexual sin, that is, to break the pattern of marriage...which LGBT inclinations are only one form, are certainly defects and deficiencies'. Oxford Pride released a statement saying they were 'disgusted and disappointed' by the letter, saying that 'the authors believe we are 'defects', and they would have us go through harm to change ourselves'.<sup>58</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey

## Ranking

2 - Oxford Presbyterian defines marriage as 'between one man and one woman' which suggests they do not affirm LGBTQ+ relationships. There is minimal information on what is actively taught. Since the minister signed the described letter, it implies this Church may support practices which try to change a person's sexuality. Based on the current evidence, Oxford Presbyterian is rated at a 2.

---

<sup>57</sup><http://www.epcew.org.uk/resources/westminster-confession-of-faith/chapter-xxiv-of-marriage-and-divorce>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/126144330747387/posts/5497845993577167/?d=n>  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-60405091>

## Restoration Church

84 Botley Rd, Oxford OX2 0BX

<http://restorationchurch.uk/>

### Overview

- Affiliated with Christian Concern, an organisation which opposes LGBTQ+ identity and relationships, and 'supports and advocates for policies which uphold the male-female distinction for the good of all'.<sup>59</sup>
- Their website states 'that God created marriage solely for one man and one woman, and created sex only for married couples', under 'our beliefs'.<sup>60</sup>
- On their YouTube page, they have shared testimonies of people who have 'suffered' from same-sex attraction and 'transgenderism'.<sup>61</sup>
- Blog post by Pastor (2021) argues that 'LGBTQ and Feminism etc' are 'concerned with kicking Christ out of society and reversing God's good order for His good creation'.<sup>62</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

### Ranking

1 - Restoration Church directly opposes LGBTQ+ identity and relationships, through blog posts and affiliation with similar organisations. By sharing testimonies of those who 'suffered' same-sex feelings, for example, this Church may be seen as indirectly promoting conversion therapy. This church receives a rating of 1.

## Sacred (Christ Church Cathedral)

St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1DP

<https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/oxfords-cathedral/sacred/>

### Overview

- Member of the Church of England.
- Host a monthly service particularly aimed at LGBTQ+ people at which the sermon is often given by an LGBTQ+ person and almost always touches on queer experience and theology.<sup>63</sup>
- Affirming chaplaincy support is signposted and any homophobia from among the congregation is challenged.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> <https://restorationchurch.uk/about-us>, <https://christianconcern.com/ccissues/sexuality/>  
<https://christianconcern.com/ccissues/gender/>

<sup>60</sup> <https://restorationchurch.uk/our-beliefs-1>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vo3bkFwYJXs&t=63s>

<sup>62</sup> <https://restorationchurch.uk/restoration-writings-1/f/god%E2%80%99s-faithfulness-in-our-faithlessness-a-word-on-easter>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/oxfords-cathedral/sacred>

<sup>64</sup> Collected from self-report survey.



- Anonymous testimony says that “it is encouraging to meet other LGBTQ+ Christians in a space where you know you are fully accepted”.<sup>65</sup>
- Core member of Affirming Ministers Breakfast.
- Responded to our survey.

### Ranking

5 - The ‘Sacred’ services receive a rating of 5. They are a safe and welcoming place for LGBTQ+ Christians to have fellowship and hear affirming theology. Services at the cathedral include and affirm LGBTQ+ relationships and identities in teaching, and cover these topics frequently.

## **Saint Mary Magdalen**

9 Magdalen St, Oxford OX1 3AE

<http://www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of the Church of England which offers worship and witness in the catholic tradition.
- Although relationships and sexuality are not commonly discussed, when they are this is affirming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.
- Last time LGBTQ+ people were talked about in Sunday service was in late 2022, following the publication of the Bishop of Oxford’s essay, ‘Together in Love and Faith’.<sup>66</sup>
- Leadership of this church are in favour of the blessing of same-sex married couples in the Church of England.<sup>67</sup>
- Responded to our survey.

### Ranking

4 - Saint Mary Magdalen does not have any explicit teaching against LGBTQ+ identity or relationships. This topic is rarely discussed, and so there may be members of the congregation who hold different views than the leadership. Overall, this church seems to hold an affirming attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community and it gets a rating of 4.

---

<sup>65</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>66</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>67</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

## St Albans Church and Hall

67 Charles St, Oxford OX4 3AU

<http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/our-sites/st-albans-church>

### Overview

- Branch of St Mary and St John, and adjoining leadership and values.
- Member of the Church of England and the Inclusive Church Network.<sup>68</sup>
- History of affirming attitudes towards LGBTQ+ relationships, all the way from 2017, with publicly available articles on their website.<sup>69</sup>
- They also have a rainbow flag in their Instagram profile picture as a public symbol of their attitudes towards inclusion.
- Leadership of this church are in favour of the blessing of same-sex married couples, but are not currently allowed to by Church of England rules.
- Responded to our survey.

### Ranking

4 - St Albans Church openly describes itself as inclusive and is very clear on its stance of affirming LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. All should be welcomed by and affirmed by the leadership and congregation. St Alban's gets a rating of 4.

## St Aldates Church

St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BT

<https://staldates.org.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of the Church of England.
- On Associate Minister Simon Ponsonby's podcast, *Unscripted*, which is advertised and supported by St Aldates, he implies that any sex outside of a 'lifelong' marriage between a 'husband and a wife', is an 'impurity'.<sup>70</sup> (July 2023)
- The podcast also describes a process of prayer and petition of 'seeking God' that will 'change our understanding' and 'attitudes of our hearts' and 'affect our lifestyle, things about, concerning sex, sensuality, impurity, and lust'.<sup>71</sup>
- An anonymous testimony, by someone who had listened to these podcasts by Rev Ponsonby, stated, "I came to Aldates because I was told by friends in the church, it was a youth friendly church, welcoming, progressive and liberal. ... I was totally shocked and felt sick. I've been attending faithfully for over a year and a half, and had no idea the leadership held these beliefs."<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.inclusive-church.org/place/st-albans-church/>

<sup>69</sup> <http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/feast-of-the-transfiguration-the-clearer-reality-of-dreams>

<sup>70</sup> <https://staldates.org.uk/unscripted/ephesians-4-soft-hearts>

<sup>71</sup> <https://staldates.org.uk/unscripted/ephesians-4-soft-hearts>

<sup>72</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

- In 2022, a PCC member signed the open letter responding to the Government's proposals of a ban on conversion therapy. The letter expresses concern at areas of Christianity becoming criminalised through a conversion therapy ban, such as in pastoral conversations. The letter states that 'internal desires to commit sexual sin, that is, to break the pattern of marriage...which LGBT inclinations are only one form, are certainly defects and deficiencies'. Oxford Pride released a statement saying they were 'disgusted and disappointed' by the letter.<sup>73</sup>
- In 2020 the Oxford Student published an article on homophobia in OICCU, St Ebbe's and St Aldates. This article contained various anonymous testimonies of homophobic culture in these churches, including the following: "At St Aldate's, I met a group of celibate gay Christians, who shook up my view of what homophobic people were like. ... For the first time, I was encountering kind homophobic people. Sitting in their living room, I felt both loved and hated, blessed and cursed. They presented me with a choice – a relationship with Jesus or relationships with people of the same sex. There was no middle way, no ability to live authentically as a queer Christian, in their view."<sup>74</sup>
- Ex-Minister for St Aldates, Rev Charlie Cleverley, signed the 'Response to Transgender welcome letter' in 2019, which describes the gender binary as an almost 'universal biological reality' part of God's creation, and argues against Gender Transition Recognition services.<sup>75</sup>
- In 2018, much of the then-leadership, including current leadership Mark Brickman and Simon Ponsonby, signed the Letter from 'Concerned Anglicans in the Oxford Diocese in Response to Ad Clerum'. This is a letter which opposes the language of 'LGBTQ+ identity', and the proposition of LGBTQ+ identifying people being included in leadership.<sup>76</sup>
- An anonymous testimony describes the church hosting a "Pray Away The Gay' 3 day conference"<sup>77</sup> in 2005, which was advertised on the church's website at the time.<sup>78</sup> the church has, as far as we can tell, not apologised for.
- In 2003, Ex-Minister Charlie Cleverly was part of a group of ministers that sought to block the appointment of Canon Jeffrey John, who described himself as a "celibate homosexual", as Bishop of Reading. This group claimed that appointing him as Bishop goes against Biblical teachings.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/126144330747387/posts/5497845993577167/?d=n>,  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-60405091>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/11/06/102923/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.responsetohob.co.uk/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.oxforddef.co.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=234142>

<sup>77</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>78</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20050309004157/http://www.staldates.org.uk/conferences/>;  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20050309075712/http://www.living-waters-uk.com/ConferenceEvents.htm>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/6574588.ultimatum-issued-gay-bishop-row/>

- A trans congregant, Chrissie Chevasutt, who has attended the church for more than 3 decades<sup>80</sup>, has publicly spoken of suffering “psychological marginalisation and discrimination” from St Aldates Leadership team over a 3 year period.<sup>81</sup> After making a safeguarding disclosure on this matter, she has experienced the church leadership “obstructing their own church Internal Safeguarding Officer from fulfilling their duties”.<sup>82</sup> Chrissie claims the church “failed to comply with the normal and expected parish safeguarding procedures and policy”.<sup>83</sup> The Oxford Diocese Safeguarding leads proposed a mediation between herself and the leadership team at St Aldates, however, the church leadership rejected this offer of mediation “without explanation or offering alternatives”.<sup>84</sup>
- In a second testimony, Chrissie described two teenage members of the church who “experienced homophobic attitudes, culture, teaching and ministry within the Youth ministry of St Aldates, and in the annual church pilgrimage to New Wine and Soul Survivor.” She described homophobia “so severe” that “ten years on ... these two beautiful young people are still battling with the mental [and] physical health problems ... that have crippled their lives.” Chrissie stated, “I saw and witnessed first hand the torment these young people and their families went through, believing they were condemned by God, having been ostracised by their church.”<sup>85</sup>
- Anonymous testimony states that, “to discover, one, two or three years down the road of deep friendships, faith, trust, and intimacy, sometimes to a level we have never known before, in a place where we have bared our souls, made ourselves totally vulnerable, where we have loved, served and freely given of ourselves, our time and our money, to then discover we are no longer acceptable for who we are, is devastating, deeply damaging and has caused many ... to lose their faith altogether, to walk away from church, God and fellowship.”<sup>86</sup>
- Anonymous testimony suggests that there has been “some recent upsetting preaching on a passage in Ephesians” which made them realise “that St Aldate’s wasn’t truly queer friendly as an institution”.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02jyiyXdQsa8HMJFqCwStPazKZLwtMEefUk8ufQtKJ8rdnJkX15q8yjoZmTDrX2fCvI&id=100063863863087](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02jyiyXdQsa8HMJFqCwStPazKZLwtMEefUk8ufQtKJ8rdnJkX15q8yjoZmTDrX2fCvI&id=100063863863087)

<sup>81</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0uKQbi5oBibTKxRS8dhkufJYspJFMRxcRwRet862hS5HeP4n13Sq1uShjTxkMovbMI&id=100063863863087](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0uKQbi5oBibTKxRS8dhkufJYspJFMRxcRwRet862hS5HeP4n13Sq1uShjTxkMovbMI&id=100063863863087)

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0WNMWejSvuoNpANWD7msb7PFBT84T6c3dzVV33MPRBoMDBkx9BY46oV5PPbveRpiHI&id=100063863863087](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0WNMWejSvuoNpANWD7msb7PFBT84T6c3dzVV33MPRBoMDBkx9BY46oV5PPbveRpiHI&id=100063863863087)

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02BvRG9cEZCYcXmUPwFLVuZ9wRJFcPOKJYmF8PpcryP63MJT7yC6MKoADvrZovf5bKI&id=100063863863087](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02BvRG9cEZCYcXmUPwFLVuZ9wRJFcPOKJYmF8PpcryP63MJT7yC6MKoADvrZovf5bKI&id=100063863863087)

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02UuVpBGkyyZ1fJS3d35tqmLuqLw1aVXigEjkwWBoS3bmZG5LqBRB2bw7mWjB2JabPI&id=100063863863087](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02UuVpBGkyyZ1fJS3d35tqmLuqLw1aVXigEjkwWBoS3bmZG5LqBRB2bw7mWjB2JabPI&id=100063863863087)

<sup>82</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action, Chrissie has asked to be named.

<sup>83</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>84</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>85</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action, Chrissie has asked to be named.

<sup>86</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>87</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

- Anonymous testimony states that “I am never quite sure where me and my identity stands here”<sup>88</sup>, while another states they “joined a very affirming small group” and “had a very positive experience”.<sup>89</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

### Ranking

1 - St Aldates, and particularly its leadership, has a history of campaigning against LGBTQ+ relationships and identities, including attempting to stop the appointment of a celibate homosexual bishop. The church has a history of hosting conversion therapy events, for which the church and its leaders appear to have never apologised for or even distanced itself/themselves from. The church has tried to remain silent on LGBTQ+ relationships since the arrival of Rev Stephen Foster. Church leadership are unlikely to affirm LGBTQ+ people and may expect them to live celibate lives. In Unscripted, through the encouragement to prayer and petition for a person struggling with sexual immorality, which includes LGBTQ+ relationships, leadership could be seen to indirectly support conversion therapy and/or practices. The church has seemingly been involved in serious safeguarding failings regarding LGBT+ people, and have failed to cooperate with the Diocese Safeguarding leads. For these reasons it has been given an overall rating of 1.

### **St Andrew’s Church (Headington)**

St Andrew's Rd, Headington, Oxford OX3 9DL

<https://www.standrewsheadington.co.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of the Church of England.
- Mentions the LGBTQ+ community in sermons that refer to marginalised communities.
- Does not explicitly preach on relationships or sexuality.
- LGBTQ+ members are welcome in the church and leadership team, with no requirement to remain celibate.<sup>90</sup>
- Cannot not yet marry same-sex couples, but would likely make an affirming choice when possible.<sup>91</sup>
- Responded to our survey.

---

<sup>88</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>89</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>90</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>91</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

## Ranking

3 - St Andrew's (Headington) welcomes LGBTQ+ people as members of the Church and leadership team. There is not much explicit teaching on relationships, but the congregation are likely to be affirming and inclusive. This church is clearly on a journey towards being a fully inclusive, affirming congregation, and as such it gets a rating of 3.

### **St Andrew's Church (Linton Road)**

Linton Rd, Oxford OX2 6UG

<https://www.standrewsoxford.org/>

## Overview

- Member of the Church of England.
- Vicar and Associate Vicar have signed the Letter from Concerned Anglicans in the Oxford Diocese in Response to Ad Clerum (Oct 2018), a letter which opposes the language of 'LGBTQ+ identity', and the proposition of LGBTQ+ identifying people being included in leadership.<sup>92</sup>
- Another minister has signed the Response to Transgender welcome letter (May 2019), which argues against Gender Transition Recognition services<sup>93</sup>
- Bishop of Slough preached there in Nov 2022, directly opposing LGBTQ+ relationships. An anonymous congregant shared with us an apology that was issued by the minister following the service. However, this referenced St Ebbe's statement<sup>94</sup> as an example of how to 'graciously express very divergent views' alongside Bishop Steven's essay.<sup>95</sup>
- Anonymous testimony suggests that "at least one church member left this parish as a result of this sermon, not wanting to go back again".<sup>96</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey.

## Ranking

1 - St Andrew's (Linton Road) appears to have conservative views in its leadership which are not shared by the whole congregation. Promotion of St Ebbe's Statement as 'gracious' suggests that this church would not be affirming of LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. This church receives a rating of 1.

---

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.oxforddef.co.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=234142>

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.responsetohob.co.uk/>

<sup>94</sup> <https://stebbes.org/statement/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/together-in-love-and-faith.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

## St Columba's United Reformed Church

Alfred St, Oxford OX1 4EH

<http://www.saintcolumbas.org/about-us/location/>

### Overview

- Registered for same-sex marriage.
- This church has a 'strong affirming presence in the queer community' (June 2022).<sup>97</sup>
- Hosts a monthly group meeting which explores LGBTQ+ inclusion and affirmation, which has been active since 2004.<sup>98</sup>
- Hired an Outreach and Development Worker with Transgender, Intersex and non-binary people in 2022, who works to help and protect LGBTQ+ people from spiritual abuse in churches.<sup>99</sup>
- Regularly discusses LGBTQ+ issues in services and preaches an affirming attitude towards LGBTQ+ identity and relationships.
- Anonymous testimony describes the church as "a safe space to explore my faith, gender, and sexuality, and more than that, it was and is a place of hope. It's a place where all kinds of people come together, where all different kinds of relationship are assumed to be valid' and that 'being around older members LGBTQ+ community in a mundane, day-to-day setting, is incredibly healing".<sup>100</sup>
- Responded to our survey.

### Ranking

5 - St Columba's URC is a welcoming and inclusive church with a strong focus on making LGBTQIA+ members feel accepted and respected. They put their beliefs of affirmation into practice through their hiring and monthly meetings, it is easy to give this church a rating of 5.

## St Ebbe's Church

Penny Farthing Pl, Oxford OX1 1QF

<http://www.stebbes.org/>

### Overview

- Currently a member of the Church of England.
- In 2003, the current Rector, Vaughan Roberts, was part of a group of ministers that sought to block the appointment of Canon Jeffrey John, who

---

<sup>97</sup><https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/20178470.pride-month-oxfords-lgbtq-changemakers/>

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.saintcolumbas.org/church-life/first-sunday>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.saintcolumbas.org/church-life/tgnc-outreach>

<sup>100</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

described himself as a “celibate homosexual”, as Bishop of Reading, claiming this would go against Biblical teachings.<sup>101</sup>

- Current rector, Vaughan Roberts, has been an outspoken against same-sex marriage in the Church, LGBTQ+ identities, and particularly against individuals living as their preferred gender, in the Church and outside of it.
- For example, his book, *Transgender: Christian compassion, convictions and wisdom for today's big questions*, argues that people should resist gender dysphoria through prayer and petition, and that Christians should encourage those struggling with gender dysphoria around them to live as their gender assigned at birth, which, he argues, is how God made them.
- Rector Vaughan Roberts was also one of the signers of the Nashville Statement, which denies ‘that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God’s original creation’ and that ‘adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception’ is not consistent with ‘God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption’.<sup>102</sup>
- Hosted True Freedom Trust,<sup>103</sup> an organisation that helps ‘Christians who struggle with same-sex attractions or gender identity’ to hold to ‘Biblical pattern for gender and sexual relationships or gender identity’.<sup>104</sup>
- In February 2023, issued a public statement on the C of E’s decision to allow blessings for Same-sex Marriage, where they threaten to distance, and possibly leave the C of E for this decision. They argue those supporting the Blessing to have ‘chosen the way of compromise with the world and disobedience to God’s word’ rather than St Ebbes’ choice to ‘stay faithful to Christ, whatever the cost’ and oppose the blessing.<sup>105</sup>
- This statement follows on from a book *Together in Love and Faith? Should the Church bless same-sex marriage?*, which disagrees with the Bishop of Oxford’s support for the blessing.<sup>106</sup>
- As reported by The Oxford Student, Roberts has called homosexuality an ‘unchosen relational disability’ in teaching and promised that ‘change can happen’ with regards to sexual attraction.<sup>107</sup>
- Roberts, and many other members of leadership at St Ebbes, signed letters opposing LGBTQ+ affirmations in Church, including the ‘Response to Transgender welcome letter’ in 2019, which argues against Gender Transition Recognition services<sup>108</sup>, and the letter of ‘Concerned Anglicans in the Oxford Diocese in Response to Ad Clerum’ which opposes the

---

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/6574588.ultimatum-issued-gay-bishop-row/>

<sup>102</sup> <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement>

<sup>103</sup> True Freedom Trust, Trustee’s Annual Report, May 2016 -17.

<sup>104</sup> <https://truefreedomtrust.co.uk/beliefs>

<sup>105</sup> <https://stebbes.org/statement/>

<sup>106</sup> <https://ceec.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Vaughan-Roberts-Together-in-Love-and-Faith-a-response.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/12/23/the-problem-with-oiccu/>

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.responsetohob.co.uk/>



language of 'LGBTQ+ identity', and the proposition of LGBTQ+ identifying people being included in leadership.<sup>109</sup>

- In 2022, 6 of the 18 Oxford signatories of a letter responding to the Government's proposals of a ban on conversion therapy were from St Ebbes Leadership. The letter expresses concern at areas of Christianity becoming criminalised through a conversion therapy ban. Oxford Pride released a statement saying they were 'disgusted and disappointed' by the letter, saying that 'the authors believe we are 'defects', and they would have us go through harm to change ourselves.'<sup>110</sup>
- Anonymous testimony describes their own experience of leadership attempting to "coerce a young and vulnerable member who wishes to leave the church into justifying themselves on a one-to-one basis, and when they do so, to chastise them and effectively threaten them with Hell", and that they "felt unsafe' in this situation".<sup>111</sup>
- Another testimony says "I was always left on the periphery, and was often ignored by church staff. I was left very alone, I didn't know what was wrong with me. It is only later I realised it was likely because I was openly queer."<sup>112</sup>
- Apologised for not being able to respond to our survey.

## Ranking

1 - St Ebbes and their leadership are outspoken in their beliefs on the impurity of same-sex marriage, relationships and LGBTQ+ identity. There will be an expectation to remain celibate, and as your gender-assigned at birth, and this will may well be supplemented by guidance, prayer and teaching, as shown by their indirect support for conversion therapy and/or practices. For these reasons, St Ebbes is rated as a 1.

## **St Ebbe's Church Headington**

30 - 34 Lime Walk, Headington, Oxford OX3 7AE

<https://www.stebbesheadington.org/>

## Overview

- This church is governed by St Ebbe's PCC, which holds beliefs that same-sex relationships and gender transition are sinful (see St Ebbes report for more information).
- Apologised for not being able to respond to our survey.

---

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.oxforddef.co.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=234142>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-60405091>

<sup>111</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

<sup>112</sup> Testimony collected by Oxford Student Faith Action.

## Ranking

1 - Governed by St Ebbes, this church is presumed to hold the same beliefs and practises towards LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. St Ebbe's Headington is rated at a 1.

### **St Giles' Church, Oxford**

10 Woodstock Rd, Oxford OX2 6HT

<http://www.st-giles-church.org/>

## Overview

- Member of the Church of England and the Inclusive Church Network
- The leadership also run St Margaret's Church, St Margaret's Road, OX2 6RX - who are also members of the Inclusive Church Network
- Regularly include LGBTQ+ people in the teaching at Sunday services<sup>113</sup>
- Leadership of this church are in favour of the blessing of same-sex married couples in the Church of England<sup>114</sup>
- Will not expect LGBTQ+ people to remain celibate.<sup>115</sup>
- Responded to our survey

## Ranking

4 - People with LGBTQ+ identities and relationships are welcome as members and in the leadership team at St Giles'. This church is clear on its stance of inclusion and gets a rating of 4.

### **St Mary the Virgin Church, Iffley**

Church Way, Iffley, Oxford OX4 4EG

<https://iffleychurch.org.uk/>

## Overview

- Member of the Church of England
- In 2022, the ministry team and PCC attended a 6-week course on living in love and faith<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>114</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>115</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>116</sup>[https://iffleychurch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Annual-Report-Activities-2022\\_signed.pdf](https://iffleychurch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Annual-Report-Activities-2022_signed.pdf) (page 5)

- There are some sermons available online from many years ago which appear to be affirming of LGBTQ+ relationships , but these may be outdated now<sup>117 118</sup>
- No explicit support or welcome of the LGBTQ+ community on their website.
- There are LGBTQ+ members of the church who are not obviously open about their sexuality but feel fully accepted as they are.<sup>119</sup>
- Responded to our survey

### Ranking

3 - St Mary the Virgin Church preaches an inclusive theology in general, while not specifically preaching on LGBTQ+ theology. Overall, this church seems to be open to discussion; there will likely be a range of views on LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. The rating given is a 3.

## **St Mary & St John Church**

Cowley Rd, Oxford OX4 1UH

<http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of Church of England and Inclusive Church Network
- LGBTQ+ people are welcome in the congregation and the leadership team<sup>120</sup>
- Leadership of this church are in favour of the blessing of same-sex married couples in the Church of England
- Responded to our survey

### Ranking

4 - The leadership team at St Mary and St John Church are openly inclusive of LGBTQ+ identity and relationships, and seek to create a safe place for LGBTQ+ people. This Church is generally inclusive, but cannot marry same-sex couples yet although they support blessing them, if and when this is allowed by the C of E. This church receives a rating of 4.

---

<sup>117</sup> <https://iffleychurch.org.uk/from-the-vicar/magazine-come-to-a-wedding/> (2015)

<sup>118</sup> <https://iffleychurch.org.uk/sermons/sermon-god-did-not-send-the-son-into-the-world-to-condemn-the-world/> (2017)

<sup>119</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>120</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

## Trinity Church Oxford

St Barnabas C of E Primary School OX2 6BN [this may change]

<http://www.trinitychurchoxford.com/>

### Overview

- Affiliated with FIEC, who state that their affiliated churches and Pastors would not 'in good conscience, be able to perform, bless or host same-sex marriage or wedding ceremonies'.<sup>121</sup>
- FIEC also believe that 'sexual activity is a gift to be enjoyed only within (heterosexual) marriage and that, outside of this setting, it is sinful'.
- Featured on Love Oxford Students website, which appears to require churches to reject LGBTQ+ relationships as part of their theology to be recommended.<sup>122</sup>
- Affiliated with OICCU, an organisation that does not affirm LGBTQ+ identities, 'for which we provide a number of leaders including the current President' (Dec 2022.)<sup>123</sup>
- Resource for Bible study refers to 'homosexual behaviour' as 'sexual sin'.<sup>124</sup>
- Mailing list update highlights opposition to blessing same-sex relationships, stating they are 'not persuaded by the revisionist agenda'<sup>125</sup>
- Current minister signed the Letter from Concerned Anglicans in the Oxford Diocese in Response to Ad Clerum (Oct 2018), a letter which opposes the language of 'LGBTQ+ identity', and the proposition of LGBTQ+ identifying people being included in leadership.<sup>126</sup>
- In 2022, two leaders of the church signed an open letter responding to the Government's proposals of a ban on conversion therapy. The letter expresses concern at areas of Christianity becoming criminalised, such as pastoral conversations through such a ban. The letter states that 'internal desires to commit sexual sin, that is, to break the pattern of marriage... which LGBT inclinations are only one form, are certainly defects and deficiencies'.
- Oxford Pride released a statement saying they were 'disgusted and disappointed' by the letter, saying that 'the authors believe we are 'defects', and they would have us go through harm to change ourselves.'<sup>127</sup>
- In response to Oxford Pride's comments on the letter, Trinity Church shared an email to their mailing list explaining that 'pastoral conversations concerning historic Christian teaching should not be criminalised', and that Oxford Pride have 'targeted local ministers'.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> <https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage>

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.loveoxfordstudents.co.uk/find-a-church>

<sup>123</sup> <http://eepurl.com/ie5Dlr> (newsletter)

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.trinitychurchoxford.com/s/Trinity-Church-Distinctives-Romans-Term-1-1.pdf>

<sup>125</sup> [http://eepurl.com/ik5q\\_j](http://eepurl.com/ik5q_j)

<sup>126</sup> <https://www.oxforddef.co.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=234142>

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/126144330747387/posts/5497845993577167/?d=n> ,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-60405091>

<sup>128</sup> <http://eepurl.com/hVAyAf>

- Did not respond to our survey.

### Ranking

1 - Trinity Church is affiliated with organisations that are clear in their opposition of LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. The leadership echo this view and online resources suggest there is teaching against LGBTQ+ relationships in the church. Signing the letter that opposes a ban on conversion therapy, and continuing such support after Oxford Pride's comments, suggests this church may support conversion therapy in the form of pastoral conversations and prayer and petition. Trinity Church receives a rating of 1.

## **Wesley Memorial Methodist Church**

New Inn Hall St, Oxford OX1 2DH

<http://www.wesleymem.org.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of Inclusive Church Network.
- Registered to perform same-sex marriage.
- Inclusive of LGBTQ+ identity and relationship in practice and services.
- If there were to be any teaching that suggests LGBTQ+ identity or relationships were sinful, action would be taken to rectify this as it is wholly against their theological perspective.<sup>129</sup>
- All church members, including openly LGBTQ+ people, have a pastoral visitor.<sup>130</sup>
- Leadership at this church are required to undertake Unconscious Bias training and an EDI module which encourages us to challenge injustice, racism, homophobia, transphobia and any other kind of prejudice, as per the 'Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy' of the Methodist Church.<sup>131 132</sup>
- This church firmly holds to the statement of the national Methodist Church. 'The Methodist Church position is that, regardless of government decisions, it is not permitted for conversion therapy, including trans conversion therapy to take place on Methodist premises, and that no conversion therapy can take place in the name of the Methodist Church.'<sup>133</sup>
- Responded to our survey.

---

<sup>129</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>130</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/>

<sup>132</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/21973/conf-2021-agenda-volume-3.pdf> (page 241)

## Ranking

4 - This church encourages a culture of openness and respect for LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. Same-sex relationships are celebrated through marriage ceremonies and the training that staff go through ensures that all LGBTQ+ church members are protected. For this reason, Wesley Memorial receives a rating of 4.

**NB:** The previous version of this report had Wesley Memorial listed as a '5'. On this note, we would like to make it explicitly clear that the change in ranking has in no way been caused by 'non-affirming' actions of this church. On the contrary, we assure the reader that Wesley Memorial is still considered 'green' and affirming of LGBTQ+ identity and relationships. The change to a '4' is merely to maintain continuity between other churches in the report itself.

## **Woodstock Road Baptist Church**

198 Woodstock Rd, Oxford OX2 7NQ

<http://wrbc.org.uk/>

## Overview

- Independent from the Baptist Union
- Affiliated with FIEC<sup>134</sup> who state that their affiliated churches and Pastors would not 'in good conscience, be able to perform, bless or host same-sex marriage or wedding ceremonies'.<sup>135</sup>
- FIEC also states its belief that 'sexual activity is a gift to be enjoyed only within (heterosexual) marriage and that, outside of this setting, it is sinful'.<sup>136</sup>
- Andy Robinson, previous Pastor, refers to his own 'experiences of same-sex attraction' in the below resources, suggesting that LGBTQ+ identities were not affirmed by the leadership team in recent history.
- Online sermon (2014)<sup>137</sup> on homosexuality argues that '(homosexual relationships) run against God's good plan for creation'
- Another sermon (2019)<sup>138</sup> states that 'God values gay people as those who are made in His image' but that 'God's plan is for sexual relationships to happen between a man and a woman in a loving, permanent relationship' and 'marriage is only between a man and a woman'.
- Online sermon (2016) on 'transgender issues' argues that 'the Bible says your body is your sexual identity, let your mind be conformed to it'; '[God] makes us male or female in line with the bodies He has given us, and they are not interchangeable, and our bodies cannot be ignored'; 'we do want to

---

<sup>134</sup> <https://fi ec.org.uk/churches/woodstock-road-baptist-church>

<sup>135</sup> <https://fi ec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage>

<sup>136</sup> <https://fi ec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/same-sex-marriage>

<sup>137</sup> <https://wrbc.org.uk/sermons/1114/Homosexuality>

<sup>138</sup> <https://wrbc.org.uk/sermons/1611/What%20Does%20God%20Think%20of%20Gay%20People?>

disagree with the transgender ethos and movement, and yet at the very same time fight with all our might for dignity to be given to individuals who wrestle with it'.<sup>139</sup>

- Online blog posts (2020) to support the above view.<sup>140 141</sup>
- Did not respond to our survey

### Ranking

1 - Woodstock Baptist Road holds affiliation with FIEC, strongly suggesting they do not affirm LGBTQ+ identities or relationships. It is probable that this church asks LGBTQ+ members to remain celibate or as their gender assigned at birth in order to join fully into its community. This church receives a rating of 1.

## **University Church of St Mary the Virgin**

High St, Oxford OX1 4BJ

<http://www.university-church.ox.ac.uk/>

### Overview

- Member of the Church of England.
- Offers services of celebration for same-sex couples in civil partnerships.<sup>142</sup>
- Hosted LGBTQ-affirming speaker Jayne Ozanne<sup>143</sup> in 2018, and several discussion and Bible studies on the theology of equal marriage.
- With a high number of LGBTQ+ church members, LGBTQ+ issues are often part of the ongoing conversation within the church.<sup>144</sup>
- The Pride Service<sup>145</sup> takes place here before the Pride Parade in June.
- LGBTQ+ identities are respected and included in many sermons.<sup>146</sup>
- Responded to our survey.

### Ranking

5 - LGBTQ+ identities and relationships are affirmed and welcomed into the discourse at University Church. A space is actively created for LGBTQ+ Christians every year in the Pride Service and same-sex relationships are celebrated with an honorary service. This church receives a rating of 5.

---

<sup>139</sup> <https://wrbc.org.uk/sermons/1345/Transgender%20Issues>

<sup>140</sup> <https://wrbc.org.uk/2020/02/21/speaking-without-fear-on-sexual-issues-1/>

<sup>141</sup> <https://wrbc.org.uk/2020/02/28/speaking-without-fear-on-sexual-issues-2/>

<sup>142</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>143</sup> <https://www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/sermons/just-love>

<sup>144</sup> Collected from self-report survey.

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/thinking/oxford-pride>

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/sermons/we-do-not-lose-heart>,  
<https://www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/sermons/transforming-fire-gods-love>,  
<https://www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/sermons/gods-unlikely-beauty>

## **Resources of support**

If you have been affected by any of the issues spoken about, and require welfare support, please don't hesitate to reach out and we can put you in touch with an Oxford queer- affirming chaplain. Feel free to send us an email at [oxford.student.faith.action@co.uk](mailto:oxford.student.faith.action@co.uk), or message us on our social media pages found at '*oxfordstudentfaithaction*'.

For crisis support, Samaritans are found at **116 123**, or, for Galop's helpline supporting LGBTQ+ individuals facing abuse of any sort, call **0800 999 5428**.

## **Please get in touch**

We aim for this information to be as accurate as possible, so please contact us if you feel we have misrepresented any of the churches listed. We gladly welcome feedback and testimonies from church leadership or members. Comments and queries can be sent to the following email address: [oxford.student.faith.action@co.uk](mailto:oxford.student.faith.action@co.uk).

*Oxford Student Faith Action*