

Extending the table



Gathering Voices
Day conference Saturday 5th October 2019
10-4.30pm, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK
(9.30am registration)

Extending the table

Towards a 'radical new Christian inclusion' for LGBT+ people

Our 2019 day conference exploring how to help our churches progress towards a 'radical new Christian inclusion' for LGBT+ people will be held on Saturday 5th October 2019 at De Montfort University in Leicester.

Our aim is to help churches to become more inclusive – as Oasis Foundation Open Church Charter says:

“

“any person regardless of sexuality or gender identity will find our local church to be a place of welcome, embrace, inclusion, affirmation and sanctuary.”

”

DMUfreedom

We are pleased that De Montfort University (DMU) is hosting *Gathering Voices 2019: Extending the table*.

DMU has a strong reputation and commitment to equality and diversity, rooted in a culturally vibrant city. The university is strengthened and supported by the local community, students, staff, and partners from a spectrum of cultures and backgrounds.

DMUfreedom is their equality and diversity charter, built on a strong reputation for positive action. DMU has a conviction that they can and should lead on fairness and inclusion – a commitment to continue cultivating an environment in which staff, students and partners have freedom.

In particular the charter says that we should have freedom to be ourselves in a supportive environment that allows us space to explore our personal identity.

Safe space

We intend that Gathering Voices is a safe place.

You should be free to be “you” and we ask that you respect the team, speakers, other delegates, and everyone else involved in the conference: please don’t share people’s full names online.

Please don’t take photos or videos without making sure the people in the photos/videos are happy for you to photograph them. In particular, do not video or record sound during the breakout sessions.

The Gathering Voices team are hoping to video the keynote speakers and record interviews. We will ensure no member of the conference delegates will be included in the video or interview unless they are happy to be included to ensure the conference remains a safe space.

About

Gathering Voices is a collaborative network of Christian organisations that encourage churches to be fully inclusive and affirming of all people without regard of gender and sexuality.

Our core values are that churches should:

- Show **welcome** to everyone.
- **Embrace** human diversity.
- Demonstrate **inclusion**.
- Provide **affirmation** of the gifts and calling of every individual.
- Offer **sanctuary** and be a safe space.

We present an ongoing series of events, conferences, and resources aimed at enabling churches to move from welcome to full inclusion of everybody.

We intend that Gathering Voices is a safe place.

2019 Programme

Morning session

Time	Event
0930	Registration
1000	Welcome and Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening prayer• Welcome to Leicester• Key note: '<i>Welcome, hospitality and LGBT people seeking refuge and asylum</i>'
1050	Coffee break and Marketplace
1130	Breakout groups
1230	Lunch and Marketplace

Afternoon session

Time	Event
1330	Key note: ' <i>We Need To Talk About Bi</i> '
1410	Breakout groups
1510	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coffee and cake• Marketplace
1550	Final thoughts & Worship
1600	Finish

Breakout Groups

Most breakout groups are presented twice (in the morning session then again in the afternoon session)

Group	Presenter
Bisexual Christian experiences	Dr Carol Shepherd (University of Winchester)
Creating safe sacred spaces for LGBT+ Christians	Kieran Bohan & Desiree Elliot (Open Table)
The Bible, welcome and hospitality	Fr Julian Hollywell
Inclusion & LGBT young people	Jade Irwin (Diverse Church)
The Equality Act and religious exemptions	Clare Collier
LGBT people seeking refuge and asylum	Leicester team
Supporting families with transgender relatives	Liz Connelly

Gathering Voices 2019 – speakers and breakout group leaders

Keynote speakers



Luke Dowding is the Executive Director of [OneBodyOneFaith](#). He previously worked within the advertising industry in London.

Luke is a fervent campaigner and fundraiser for LGBT+ rights in Albania, and patron for [Streha](#): the first shelter for LGBTQ+ homeless young people in the Balkans. He believes that at the core of Christian identity is the inclusion of the marginalised regardless of their beliefs or orientation.

Luke's marriage to Steven, at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, was the first same-gender marriage held within the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Luke has a degree in Theology from Spurgeon's College and a Masters in Biblical Studies from King's College London. He is a Deacon and Trustee at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, and Co-Director of [Affirm](#) a UK network of Baptist Christians working together for LGBT+ inclusion. He finds time to be a Stonewall School and Faith Role Model and Committee Chair for Christians at Pride in London.

You can follow [@LukaDowding](#) on Twitter.



Dr Carol Shepherd is a Sociology Lecturer at Andover College and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Winchester, UK.

Carol has done much research on the perception that bisexual Christians have on their selves and their sexuality, and frequently speaks on issues relating to bisexuality, Christianity, and mental health

Her book *Bisexuality and the Western Christian Church: The Damage of Silence* (2019, [Palgrave](#)) critically examines the lived experiences of bisexual Christians across a range of Christian traditions here in the UK and in the USA.

Under a pseudonym, she also published an autobiographical work *119: My Life as a Bisexual Christian* – a personal account of how the system failed her as an individual, and the failure of a whole system to recognise and provide for a whole group of people within it.

Carol is secretary of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups.

You can follow [@bispacemission](#) on Twitter.

Breakout group leaders



Kieran Bohan is originally from London, now living in Liverpool.

He trained for the Roman Catholic priesthood in his 20s, but chose not to be ordained. He is now a lay member of the leadership team at [St Bride's CofE Church](#) in Toxteth.

In May 2012 he and his partner celebrated the [first civil partnership to be registered in a place of worship in the UK](#).

In March 2019 Kieran was commissioned by the Archdeacon of Liverpool as a Missional Leader with responsibility for outreach and pastoral care for the LGBT+ community, and training around gender and sexuality issues for faith communities, in the Diocese of Liverpool.

He co-ordinates [Open Table](#), a network of ecumenical worship communities for LGBTQIA+ Christians and all who seek and inclusive church. He is also part-time chaplain for a regional Christian charity supporting vulnerable adults.

You can follow [@opentablelgbt](#) on Twitter.



Clare Collier is Advocacy Director at the human rights organisation Liberty, where she leads several teams that work together to protect rights and hold the powerful to account.

Prior to joining Liberty, Clare was Legal Director at the Equality & Human Rights Commission. She has specialised in human rights, equality, and public law litigation, advisory and policy work since qualifying as a solicitor in 2002.

[Liberty](#) is an independent membership organisation. We challenge injustice, defend freedom and campaign to make sure everyone in the UK is treated fairly.

You can follow [@CollierClare](#) on Twitter

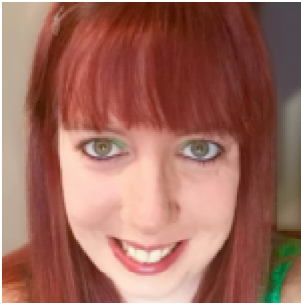


Fr Julian Hollywell is a parish priest, living as Vicar of Spondon and an experienced Spiritual Director walking alongside diverse people from different contexts.

Fr Julian believes “We are all created, held, and nurtured in God’s love – whatever our gender or heritage, whether we are straight or gay, regardless of disability or mental health issue.”

Fr Julian also co-founded the Open Table Derby community in 2018.

You can follow [@RevJFH](#) on Twitter.



Jade Irwin is National Director of [Diverse Church \(DC\)](#).

She has a wide experience of working in religious and non-religious youthwork settings as a Youth and Family worker in Belfast.

Prior to becoming National Director, she led sessions on DC National Meet Up Days, and been involved with leading the Belfast hub for DC18, and been on the host team setting up DC19.

You can follow [@jade_irwin](#) on Twitter



The Very Revd David Monteith has been Dean of Leicester since 2013 and had the lead role in the Diocese for interring the remains of Richard III in Leicester Cathedral in March 2015.

Originally from Enniskillen in Northern Ireland, David has previously served Birmingham and London, including at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

He is committed to living with diversity – living in Leicester, one of the most multicultural cities in Britain. The cathedral offers generous Christian hospitality to all.

David shares long-term interests in music, poetry and the visual arts. He shares his life in a Civil Partnership with David Hamilton.

You can follow [@davidrmmonteith](#) on Twitter.

Getting to De Montfort University



Parking instructions

Parking is available (free of charge) on the main car park at De Montfort University. If you are asked why you are here explain you are attending the Gathering Voices Conference in Hugh Aston Building.

Please be aware that parking is restricted around Hugh Aston Building.

Accessible parking

Visitors who have disabilities or mobility challenges (blue disabled badge holders) may park on the road outside Hugh Aston on the double yellow lines along the **The Newark** or **Castle View Road**.

Others without blue badges may park in the car park outside **Edith Murphy building** (8 on the map) via Castle view road opposite Hugh Aston (20 on the map). The road and car park is best accessed via **St Nicholas Roundabout** through St Augustine Road, Dunn's Lane and The Newark.

The conference is in the **Hugh Aston Building** (number 20 on the map). **Access is at the rear entrance and along ground-floor corridors**. Break out rooms are on the first floor – lift access is available.

We have a team of stewards to assist you getting around the building.

How to get to De Montfort University

You can download the latest version of the [official campus map](#).

By car

Leicester is just off the M1 and close to the main A1, allowing easy access to the north and south. The M69 and M6 are also close by and offer access to Birmingham, Wales and the south west.

Use postcode **LE2 7DP** – this will direct you to the campus centre and the car park will be clearly signposted for staff and visitors.

Cyclists

Cyclists are well catered for with a marked network of cycle routes across the city. The bike park in Town Hall Square means you can leave your bike safely and even take a shower or change a tyre!

Public transport

Bus and train stations are located in the city centre. High speed train links connect Leicester to London and many other large towns and cities, while bus and coach

services provide great value and reliable connections across Leicester and to most parts of the UK. Park and ride services are also provided in the city.

Visit dmu.ac.uk/publictransport for links to public transport routes, timetables and journey planners.

Our partners

For 2019, Gathering Voices is pleased to have partnered with:

- [Accepting Evangelicals](#)
- [Diverse Church](#)
- [Evangelical Fellowship](#)
- [Inclusive church](#)
- [Open Table](#)
- [Quest](#)

