

31 May 2019.

STATEMENT FROM REVEREND JOHN PARKER

Following the story in the Mail on Sunday (27 May 2019) and various comments on social media I would like to clarify the role of the Diocese and Bishop of Chelmsford in my resignation as vicar of the parishes of Fordham and Eight Ash Green.

1. For the last few years I have met with the Deanery and with the Bishops of the diocese to express my concerns over the Church of England embracing unbiblical approaches to matters of sexuality and gender.
2. To that end I met with Bishops Stephen, Roger and Peter in March 2017 and a further meeting with Bishop Stephen in September 2018
3. Over recent years I, often together with others, have also entered into extensive and sometimes lengthy correspondence (most recently in December 2018), setting out my disquiet to Bishop Stephen.
4. In a letter of September 2018, after a meeting with Bishop Stephen, I declared myself to be in broken communion with him; no response was forthcoming.
5. Despite the concerns that I and others presented and the biblical case we made, the diocese persisted in its approach.
6. In my parish this culminated in the Diocese supporting unequivocally the 'gender transition' of a child in a Church of England primary school. As a governor of the school the welfare of that child and all the other children in the school was my responsibility and priority and I was deeply concerned.
7. Obvious safeguarding issues were raised by this situation as well as it having clear implications for the Christian ethos of the school. The Diocese of Chelmsford was complicit in preventing any discussion of the wider issues and imposed the views and strategy of the lobby group Mermaids onto the school.
8. Furthermore, at the instruction of its Director of Education the diocese refused to consult or engage in any way with the parents/carers of any of the other children in the school but instead attempted to bind the adults involved to a culture of secrecy through its advice to the head teacher.
9. This situation, in its entire disregard for the Christian children and parents in the school, and those of other faiths and philosophies, presented the clearest possible instance of what Bishop Stephen had previously told me - that my Biblical views on sexuality were not welcome in the Church of England and that I "could leave".
10. In order to act with integrity and discharge my responsibilities for the welfare of the child concerned and wider school community, I had no choice but to resign. I did so with great regret having prayed earnestly that the diocese would not persist in actions which I considered to be profoundly detrimental to the children in our care.
11. I cannot believe that Bishop Stephen was unaware of our case, nor the advice given by the diocesan head of education, as our school was not the first in the diocese.
12. Accordingly, there can be no doubt that Bishop Stephen was at all times fully aware of my position.