

# CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

Date:	5 June 2025
Service:	Choral Evensong attended by participants in Chichester Pride
Preacher:	Revd Laura Darrall, Priest-in-Charge, Lavant Churches

It was nearly 6 years ago to the day, that I walked in my first Pride parade – I was over in Brighton at the time, and God had just started to do God's thing with nudging me towards the priesthood.

I was working as a pastoral assistant at All Saints Church in Hove, an inclusive church that proudly walks with Christians at Pride each year. And something in my heart was telling me I needed to march too.

It was a day full of colour, full of beauty, joy and protest. And I found myself walking alongside others with tears streaming down my face at the vibrancy and the truth of it all. The sheer fullness of heart that we experience when we see people being completely themselves, without any barriers or walls built up through fear. Being who God created them to be.

Being who God created us to be. Because it was my first Pride marching as both a Christian and as an out member of the LGBTQIA+ community. My journey in becoming a priest was intertwined with my journey in coming out, and in being who God had created me to be. I wear this collar as someone who proudly believes in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and also someone who proudly loves my partner Joanne – who I have been blessed with by the God who is love.

The fullness of heart I experienced that Pride came from my first taste of congruence, of witnessing on the outside, who I was and am on the inside. Congruence. That should be something that we can all experience and live in, from the day we are born until the day we meet the God who loves and creates us.

But we know that that is not always the case; even though it should be. It is why Pride is both a celebration and also a protest. We cannot and should not separate the two. Because it is vital that we celebrate love being love, but it is also vital that we name the

fact that our queer siblings are dying around the world and in our own country. Just because of who we are.

The punishment, death penalty, ostracization and exclusion is entirely at odds with the gospel of love stronger than hate which we dare to proclaim. The harm currently being done to the trans community, who have recently been made so much more vulnerable than they already were, is impossible to align with the Jesus who invites everyone to his table.

The God who flung stars into space and who says in our reading from Isaiah “you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you”.

As Reverend Ruth Harley says: God says this to those who are oppressed and marginalised, disempowered and despairing. It is what God says to the exiled people in the time of the prophet Isaiah, and it is what God is still saying to all who find themselves shut out from what ought to be home, cut off or cast out, angry or grieving or numb: “you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you”.

If you are here today, and need to hear those words – please know that Jesus is speaking them over you now, “you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you”.

And in our reading from Acts, we see Peter’s vision, which announces the inclusion of all gentiles and people into the family of God. The statement that “God shows no partiality,” putting an end to any exclusion or division between the people of God.

We know that in our nation and in own church there exists both those things, both exclusion and division – but also at the same time we are rooted and called by a love that binds us and bids us to hold difference together. Costly though it may be. Impossible though it may seem. And undoubtedly, we don’t always get it right. But as Julian of Norwich says, “If I look at myself alone, I am nothing, but when I look at my fellow Christians joined together in love, I have hope”.

As someone who has both been hurt by the church, but also represents the church and loves the church – sometimes it can be costly to sit in the midst of it all. But love is costly and as a Christian I believe that the source of love – is a love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. And most importantly, is one that always brings new life.

It is to this love that I turn, and it is this love that I see ricocheting through all the goodness in Pride month through all the celebrations and the protest. The colour and

chaos, the creativity and care. Through all our spectacular God-given, God-beloved diversity. "You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you".

And my prayer is that you will have those words, written on your heart in all that you do and are, this Pride and always.

Amen.