

Church of England refuses to back same-sex marriage

LONDON (AP) — The Church of England said Wednesday it will allow blessings for same-sex, civil marriages for the first time but same-sex couples still will not be allowed to marry in its churches.

The decision followed five years of debate and consultation on the church's position on sexuality. It is expected to be outlined in a report to the church's national assembly, the General Synod, which meets in London next month.

Under the proposals, the Church of England's stance that the sacrament of matrimony is restricted to unions between one man and one woman will not change.

However, same-sex couples would be able to have a church service with prayers of dedication, thanksgiving or for God's blessing after they have a civil wedding or register a civil partnership.

Same-sex marriage has been legal in England and Wales since 2013, but the church did not change its teaching when the law changed.

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