

[0:00:00]

Louise: This is Louise Detain on behalf of the LGBT Voices Coming Out with the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, reflecting on my interview with Cassandra Howes.

I enjoyed very much meeting with Cassandra. We'd spoken on the phone previously and discussed parts of her story that she would want to share. As someone who worships in a Methodist church and is a member of the Methodist church, also as someone who is training to be a lay preacher within that church, I found her experiences very useful to understand and it helped me in the context of my own membership as someone who hasn't found a bar so far to being gay and out within the church to a lay ministry.

Cassandra's story was useful in terms of her experiences with Pilgrimage of Faith that perhaps, had it not been for that process, we wouldn't be in the position we are now, even though that process was painful and, as Cassandra said, they were playing a long game, even though many felt perhaps it should have been more overt or more in your face coming out against some of the things that had been said.

It would be nice to say that the experiences of Cassandra and others taking part in this are few and far between and that perhaps it was all over and people in church now had a better ride. And perhaps in the Methodist church that would be the case for many if asked.

However, I suppose we are more than aware of the Pentecostal churches and that actually her story is the story that continues for many LGBTI people of faith in more fundamental and evangelical factions of the church.

I think also hearing that Cassandra's ministry as a chaplain and as someone who was ordained to be out into the community was an interesting part of her story and that perhaps that's an area that many LGBTI people have felt safe to practise their ministry within their ordained ministry.

What I would hope to see is that more and more people who have got, who are in same sex relationships, or who aren't cisgender may be able to be in local church ministry. In the Methodist church that would be within the circuits and of course within parishes within the Anglican church. But perhaps there would be a space for authentic relationships, no secrets, no barriers, authentic relationships being lived out, more and more LGBTI people are able to raise family in a way that is more and more respected and less unusual, and for LGBTI families to be in manses and in vicarages and rectories and presbyteries would be something that would be really quite wonderful to see.

Cassandra's story has helped me understand that the road before me, the road laid out for me, has been laid by people who've worked hard and campaigned hard and taken great cost to their own life. And for that I am truly grateful.

[End of Transcript]