

NEWS

[Article List](#)

[Headlines](#) > Catholic-Anglican HIV plan aims to combat exclusion

CATHOLIC-ANGLICAN HIV PLAN AIMS TO COMBAT EXCLUSION PREMIUM

12 October 2017 | by [Bernadette Kehoe](#)

A good pastoral priest would say to a person with HIV, “how can I help? You are not excluded,” according to Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark, who was speaking in advance of the launch of an initiative to increase pastoral support for Christians living with HIV and reduce the stigma around the issues.

The Positive Faith project offers advice and support for anyone concerned about, or diagnosed with HIV. Archbishop Smith is supporting the scheme, which also features a new website, along with his Anglican counterpart, Bishop Christopher Chessun.

Speaking to The Tablet, Archbishop Smith referred to the way Christ reached out to those who aren't respected by society. “Because people don't understand HIV, they automatically withdraw; they don't know how to handle it. But being negative towards people with HIV goes against the Gospel,” he said. “A good parish is always a welcoming parish, that doesn't make harsh judgements. There's an assumption that if someone has HIV it's their own fault, but often HIV is passed on by a partner.”

Acknowledging it is a “delicate, sensitive” area, Archbishop Smith said. Positive Faith is rooted in “good Catholic spirituality” and will help those who have HIV and who feel rejected, to be welcomed by parishes. “If we see the Church as a field hospital then the challenge is to help heal wounds.”

Positive Faith has drawn together people living with HIV, theologians and public health sector professionals. Dominican Fr Timothy Radcliffe was also due to address the launch, saying that whilst people living with HIV may feel marginal to the Church, Christ is close to all who feel thrust to the edge. “If you are, then he is there with you, bearing the loneliness,” he said.

Parishes and schools will be able to access resources including a new video series and website from Catholics for AIDS Prevention & Support (CAPS). The series includes resources for churches and schools to raise awareness of HIV and promote action locally.

The chair of CAPS, Vincent Manning, said: “This is not a project that wags its finger at the individual and sends them off to get tested for HIV, neither is it about blaming the Church for lacking compassion.

“Positive Faith is about looking forward and offering practical help that empowers Christian people. As the lead provider of faith-based peer support in the UK, CAPS has extensive knowledge and experience to address the issues at the intersection of Christian ministry and HIV with depth and nuance – we intend to save lives.”

[Article List](#)