

Update on the assisted dying Bill passing

Rabbi Jonathan Romain writes to ministerial faith colleagues



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Dear Clergy Colleagues

My apologies, I should have written this immediately after the vote on the assisted dying Bill in the Commons last Friday (20th June 2025) but had to see to all the other things I'd neglected in the week prior.

Although the Bill passed, it is by no means a "done deal". It now has to go to the Lords, although it is reasonably likely to pass there despite the attempts there will be to derail it. But even if it does go through and comes into law, there will then be an interim period of some two years (up to a maximum of four years) when practical arrangements will be put into place (training, paperwork, monitoring body etc) so that it operates smoothly and with all the necessary safeguards.

If it does become law, it will be another in the series of major social changes that have occurred through Private Members Bills in recent years: abolition of capital punishment, the legalisation of abortion, the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Those within the Church might like to know that (as I'm sure you can imagine) there are a variety of views amongst rabbis on whether it is a wise move or not, but there is a general consensus among them that if the law is changed and if a congregant wants to opt for an assisted death, those who were opposed in principle would still give pastoral support to the person and their family. I wonder if it's the same with Christian clergy?

What is beyond doubt, though, is that this will be totally new ground for clergy of all faiths - overseeing a live person die of their own choice in real time, possibly with us present.....and it will raise a vast array of emotional and practical issues. I am working on a pastoral guide for such a moment: issues to discuss with someone if they approach us about having an assisted death; a possible ceremony for the actual time of dying; holding the family afterwards (some of whom may have been against it, but all of whom will be in mourning) and I'll let you know when it's finished.

with best wishes

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