



## INTEGRITY APPRECIATES INQUIRY

A short while ago the Integrity Executive decided to embark on a process of re-visioning. This decision was the result of numerous discussions in which we reflected on the kind of ministry we offer and whether it was of continuing benefit to gay and lesbian Anglicans. We questioned whether some of the things we do were carried on simply because we had done them for a long enough period of time, and they therefore had become a kind of comfort zone.

Recent events in the life of our beloved church also indicate that those of us involved in this ministry need to be effective and responsible in the gifts that God has given us. This means, for instance, taking time to consider what God is calling us to at this moment, particularly in the light of recent events such as the report of the Lambeth Commission on Communion.

However, effectiveness, in our context, is more than simply about results. Some of the things we do might not bring results in terms of the way in which we understand that in the secular sense, but we continue them rather as a ministry of simply being there, in order to give witness to a God of grace and hope.

The process of Appreciative Inquiry as being utilised in the Diocese of New Westminster will provide the basis for our process. Appreciative Inquiry is based on the question, "what is working?" rather than "what is wrong?" In this way we are able to take forward with us the good things from our past, as we stretch ourselves to engage with an ever-changing reality in which we are called to serve our

community and ultimately our God. Following this type of process also speaks to the thankfulness within which our service needs to be enshrined. Life is difficult, especially at this time in the church for those of us who are part of the gay and lesbian community. However at the same time we need to recognise and be thankful for the signs of God's love and grace which we see in Integrity as well as the church.

This 'positive' approach to assessing our ministry, however, is not meant to be a convenient way of avoiding issues which need to be confronted. We are right to feel angry that as a community we continue to be treated as second class citizens, and this anger needs to be appropriately and responsibly expressed. We also need to consider in what ways God is calling us to respond to the needs of gay and lesbian Anglicans at this time, ways which may challenge us to move out of our comfort zone.

And so early next year we will present a forum within which members, clergy and others associated with our ministry will be invited to provide input which will help us put together a mission statement that will guide our planning for the future. This is a spiritual process through which we will seek to discern God's way forward for us as a community. Please pray for the executive as we put this process together, and let's hold each other in prayer as we remember the love of our Lord Jesus Christ whose "bonds of affection" towards us as gays and lesbians will never be broken.

**Holy One, grant to us wisdom of mind,  
peace of heart, and courage of action, for  
Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.**

*Kevin de la Mare*

*Acknowledgement: Most of the information contained in this article with respect to the Appreciative Inquiry method has been obtained from the website of the Diocese of New Westminster.*

## TO WHAT ARE WE CALLED? FROM THE EDITOR

We're almost 25! Integrity Vancouver is approaching the end of its first quarter century – could there be a more propitious time to undertake a thorough reevaluation of our vocation? This year we shall be asking God quite intentionally: to what do you call us, now? Since Integrity Vancouver is its members and friends – you – I hope you'll join with us all to ask the big question and to discern the answers. This edition of our newsletter concerns discernment and the context in which we make the discernment. Kevin will describe the appreciative inquiry model and how we will apply it over the next few months. Richard and Steve describe our Anglican Church context as that emerges from reflection on the recently released Windsor Report. Our new chaplain, Bob, invites us to see the Spirit at work today in our Church and human society, an inbreaking of the Kingdom, tumultuous and challenging but joyful, hopeful. And we've added a scattering of other voices we know you'll want to hear.

It astounds me how far we have come in our Church and in our Canadian society on that path to the full inclusion of gay/lesbian people in the life of our communities and nation. Further perhaps than we asked or imagined. Surely this human liberation is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit – and in so many ways you have responded to Her call to be a part of all this. What a ride it's been!

Yet, Holy One – to what do you call us, now? Now – a time of celebration. To life! Now – a time of fulmination, threats and calumnies directed at us and our friends. There are so many opportunities for us to stand up, to reach out, to witness, to speak the truth, to do whatever we can to protect vulnerable people, but which ones to take and at what cost? We're back at discernment.

Walter Wink, in his tremendous book *Engaging the Powers*, says that we Christians must remain "open and vulnerable to both the pain of the world and the anguish of God". But, this is "unendurable, unless it is matched with a precise sense of divine vocation". We must "not attempt to mend it all

ourselves, but to do only what God calls us to do, and not one thing more." When we discern what God asks of us "we should expect miracles, because the God who has called us to act at this precise point also is at work within us. The groaning of the Holy Spirit inside us is the hum of a dynamo producing the power to envision and act" (p. 307).

To what do You call us, now?

Don Meen

### ADVENT SERVICE

Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>

6:00 PM

St. Margaret's, Cedar Cottage

Dumfries & 22nd

(1 block north of Kingsway, 1 block east of Knight)

Eucharistic Service

followed by Potluck Feast!

Celebrant, the Rev. Dr. Bob Korth

Integrity Chaplain

## THE WINDSOR REPORT AN INITIAL CONSIDERATION

After months of speculation, inaccurate press reports and considerable anxiety on the part of conservative evangelicals and orthodox progressive, as the Report of the Lambeth Commission was released on Monday, 18 October 2004, the Feast of Saint Luke the Evangelist. There was a predictable frenzy as press releases from primates, bishops, members of the Commission and various organizations made their way to media outlets. Within forty-eight hours the Windsor Report had become 'old news', at least from the standpoint of the popular media. And now the real work begins.

Let me say first that the Windsor Report of the Lambeth Commission is precisely that: a report from a commission charged with making observations and recommendations regarding how we as Anglicans maintain the highest degree of koinonia or 'costly mutual love, participation and communion' when the 'bonds of affection' are stretched. What is more crucial is the process that the 38 autonomous provinces of the

Anglican Communion will undertake over the next months and years to receive the Report.

How will we 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' its recommendations and apply them to our life together as Anglicans? This is the real question and it can only be answered by the synodical structures of the Anglican Communion – not by houses of bishops alone or by primates alone or by the Anglican Consultative Council alone or by the Lambeth Conference alone. This will take time and it behooves people all along the spectrum of Anglican opinion to be patient, to be humble and to be open to hear the voices of all.

Those of us who have argued for the full inclusion of gay and lesbian Christians in the life of the church and who have acted in various ways to achieve this have been rebuked. We are perceived as having acted unilaterally and as having failed to articulate our case clearly and widely. So be it. Let us express our regret that our actions, as faithful to our consciences as they have been, have caused pain and confusion to our brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world. But then let us make our case for full inclusion – let us make our case for adequate oversight – lovingly, clearly and convincingly within the bonds of affection that hold us together even in conflict.

Those of us who have argued against the blessing of same-sex relationships and the ordination of non-celibate gay and lesbian clergy and who have acted in various ways to construct alternative structures have been rebuked. We are perceived as having acted outside the accepted ecclesiology of the Anglican tradition and as having contributed to division within the body. So be it. Let us express our regret that our actions, as faithful to our consciences as they have been, have caused pain and confusion to our brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world. But then let us make our case for adequate oversight – lovingly, clearly and convincingly within the bonds of affection that hold us together even in conflict.

It must be said that there are aspects of the Windsor Report that bear closer scrutiny. The prospect of an Anglican Covenant, a tentative sketch of which is laid in the Report, is worth consideration. Autonomy does not mean that we ignore how we are a Communion together and how our actions

affect the lives and witness of other Anglicans. But the challenge will be in the details of such a covenant and how we hold each other accountable without yielding our necessary understanding of authority as dispersed rather than central.

There are also aspects of the Report that need to be challenged. The use of categories from the Virginia Report is problematic. This Report has not been received, i.e. endorsed, by any synodical body. It remains a report, not an agreed statement of Anglican theology and praxis. As such it can be used but not in a fashion that presumes that it has more authority than it truly possesses.

The Anglican Church of Canada has established a working group consisting of members of the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee, the Partners in Mission Committee and the House of Bishops to prepare an initial response to the Windsor Report. This working group will need to hear from the House of Bishops, the Council of General Synod and many other groups before it can make any recommendations to the Council and to General Synod itself. This is a timeline that takes us well towards 2007.

In the meantime we continue to live our witness to the creative, redemptive and sanctifying love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Like the prophet Habakkuk we ask, "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save?" (Habakkuk 1.2) And God answers us just as God answered Habakkuk, "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay." (Habakkuk 2.2-3)

The Feast of SS Simon and Jude 2004

*The Rev. Dr. Richard Geoffrey Leggett*

To love you is to advocate your rights,  
your space, your self and to struggle with  
you, rather than against you, in our  
learning to claim our power in the world.

*Carter Heyward*

## **SCRATCHING FOR HOPE IN THE SCRAPHEAP OF NUANCE**

### **Our President's reflection on the Windsor Report**

Prior to the release of the Lambeth Commission's report on October 18th, a friend (apparently in a position to know) cautioned me to read the forthcoming document with an eye to the details, to the little things included and the little things excluded. I was told that the Windsor Report, like other highly political Church documents, would be "carefully nuanced," and that gay and lesbian Anglicans would find reason for hope in this kind of close reading.

Of course being a gay person in the Church I have many years of practice reading the official statements of Church officials in just this way. Hope or despair – and sometimes both together – can turn on a single phrase. And being an amateur wordsmith myself I know that subtleties of language and intended ambiguities can enable parties with divergent points of view to find common ground, even to issue joint statements having the appearance of unanimity.

My committee involvements, likewise, have been schooling in the art of compromise, a primary lesson being that sometimes the most that can be hoped for is a kind of "scrapheap challenge" – cobbling together a less-than-perfect though functioning machine from a junkyard of mismatched parts. The marvel of this process is that sometimes God is as much in the details as is the devil.

The Windsor Report, however, causes me to doubt the long-term efficacy of nuance as a sustainable driver of gay and lesbian hope in the Church. Reading between the lines and speaking in subtleties may be the basic grammar of diplomacy, but they have limited value when confronted by people who seem to speak an entirely different language. I'd like to give examples of both of these "nuancing techniques" in relation to the Windsor Report with particular application to our situation in New Westminster and public Rites of Blessing for same-sex unions.

### **Reading Between the Lines**

I say public Rites of Blessing because this was one of the Report's nuances quickly jumped upon with delight by people accustomed to reading between the lines for scraps of hope. The Report repeatedly critiques synodical action in support of public blessing rites, and it calls for a moratorium on all such public rites. In so doing it seems to leave the door open for private rites for same-sex couples – those quiet home blessings and "enter-by-the-side-door" church gatherings that offer same-sex couples a measure of pastoral support, though without official Church sanction. The possibility that the Windsor Report indirectly permitted private rites was interpreted by some as hopeful "wriggle room" for gay and lesbian people during the unknown number of years of (ubiquitously undefined) "study" for which the Report also calls.

The practice of private rites of blessing for same-sex couples is, in fact, already quite widespread. A newspaper in the UK reports that as many as 500 private same-sex blessings occur every year in the Church of England, often with the full knowledge and support of the local bishop. Many Integrity friends will know that the same is true in several dioceses across Canada and elsewhere today and has been for several decades, perhaps centuries. In the absence of full and public inclusion, a quiet, unofficial ceremony may be the best available option for addressing genuine pastoral need and for offering a community's heartfelt prayers of thanksgiving to our blessing God.

I'm told that in the Diocese of New Westminster, however, private blessings have been officially prohibited since the mid-1990s, a decision I've always interpreted as an act of integrity.

The logic might have run something like this: If we believe that God blesses same-sex couples with the same fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23) as God blesses straight couples – and God is worthy of our praise for both – then we cannot, in good conscience, continue to treat same-sex couples as second-rate, which private rites seem to do. In other words, "Out of respect for you and your fundamental equality, we can no longer allow you to sit at the back of the bus."

I don't know if this was the reasoning behind a prohibition of private blessings in New Westminster, but this sense of striving to live out our faith with integrity in the full light of day has been part of our

diocesan discourse about same-sex unions for many years.

It's all the more interesting, then, that prior to our Diocesan Synod's third vote in favour of public blessing rites in 2002, a conservative priest (who later walked out of Synod) suggested that Bishop Michael might forestall a church split by withdrawing his proposal for public blessing rites and quietly permitting private blessings rites instead. For him it wasn't same-sex blessings *per se* that were problematic but that such blessings would be public and official. Apparently a similar proposal was brought during ECUSA's reconciliation initiative.

This, of course, is the same offer read between the lines of the Windsor Report. If New Westminster and ECUSA "express regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached" (a phrase crawling with nuance) and disallow public Rites of Blessing (even while looking the other way while private blessings continue), then further problems may be avoided.

What both the conservative priest and the Lambeth Commission failed to appreciate, however, is that the decision to bless is rooted in the recognition that God is already blessing same-sex couples. Disallowing public rites in favour of private rites - though perhaps not a breach of affection with other Anglicans - would be a breach of personal integrity and a violation of religious conscience as informed by our experience, yes, and also our careful reflection on scripture, tradition, and reason (our study of which the Commission was apparently uninformed).

In a beautifully ironic turn, the action that this nuanced reading of the Windsor Report would tempt us to embrace - that is, a moratorium on all public Rites of Blessing while allowing private rites - is the very sin laid out by St. Paul in Romans I. Speaking of those against whom the wrath of God is being revealed, Paul writes that though they have seen and understood God's power and nature revealed in what God has made, they neither glorified God nor gave God thanks. From there they were led by their futile thinking and darkened hearts into idolatry, "the beginning and cause and end of every evil" (Wisdom 14:27).

The failure to worship God as we believe we ought is, therefore, a serious matter, and I believe this is at the heart of any reflection we may engage on the Windsor Report's request for a moratorium on public Rites of Blessing for same-sex relationships. They would ask us to hide our light (and our conviction and our conscience) under a bushel, to which those who have witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit will say, "No! I'm gonna let it shine!"

### Speaking in Subtleties

A second technique of nuanced communication revealed by the Windsor Report to be inadequate to our long-term goal of full inclusion in the Church is that of speaking in subtleties.

The most obvious of these is the Report's invitation to "express regret" on the part of those who have authorized public blessing rites, participated in the consecration of the Bishop of New Hampshire, or intervened in episcopal jurisdictions other than their own. Many church insiders quickly noted, however, that expressing regret for the consequences of an action is not the same as apologizing for the action itself. With this distinction in mind several bishops quickly complied with the letter of the Report's request.

This subtlety, however, was lost on most journalists unaccustomed to playing the "nuance game", resulting in a great deal of confusion in the media and elsewhere. The African Anglican Bishops Conference has taken the position that the Report requires not simple regrets but evidence of repentance - "a genuine change of heart and mind" - on the part of gay-affirming bishops. This could be regarded as posturing had the subtleties carefully crafted into the Report not already been confused at the news conference announcing its release.

For me, however, another short sentence in the Report even more clearly displays the apparent ineffectiveness of carefully nuanced communication. In reference to Rites of Blessing, paragraph 141 begins: "The clear and repeated statements of the Instruments of Unity have also been to advise against the development and approval of such rites." This sentence is footnoted, giving as evidence Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution I.10, statements from three Primates' Meetings, and a resolution from the Anglican Consultative Council.

The difficulty here is that none of these documents specifically advised against the development or approval of blessing rites. With the exception of the Lambeth Resolution (which was the original Junkyard War), all of the documents were very carefully crafted, and most encompassed a broad diversity of opinion. What we can make out as the voice of moral authority in them is that the Instruments of Unity could not support the authorization of blessing rites, and they urged others to reflect on the serious consequences of doing so, which is not the same as advising against such rites – a subtle distinction to be sure, but it was nuances like this that allowed gay-affirming bishops and primates to put their names to these documents, as they did.

Our hope hung on those small details.

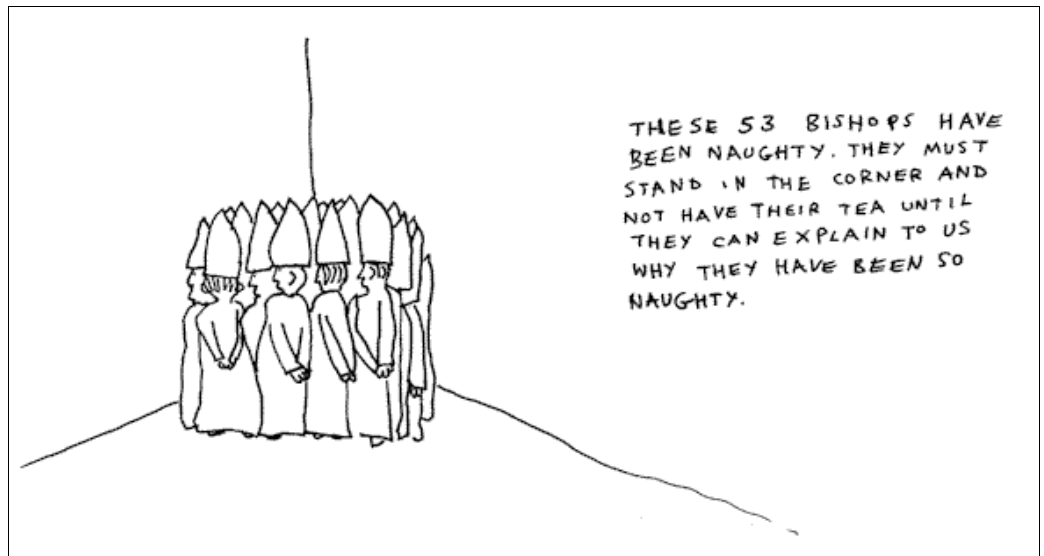
This, of course, is the kind of lawyerly attention to the little things that goes on when you're dissecting each document in search of hope, as we did, and this is what the Windsor Report now calls into question. In a single sentence the Commission swept away a dozen subtle nuances – five years of accumulated "wriggle room" we took as a life raft and had clung to for our lives, now judged by them to be so much flotsam.

This is the problem with reading between the lines and speaking in subtleties as a long-term strategy. Sometimes the details are just too subtle – sometimes people don't know how, or don't have the patience, or just aren't interested in playing the nuance game, and there's just not enough there to really make a difference.

Whether we're struggling to keep afloat ourselves or struggling to communicate to drowning people across cultures, perhaps it's time for us to act and speak more boldly, more clearly, more assertively, and not put all of our hope in the details.

And yet hope we will, and engage we will, for the real driver of our hope for full inclusion in the Church is the conviction within us, the witness of the Holy Spirit. And this is not a matter of reading between the lines or speaking in subtleties, for God has writ it large in hearts!

Steve Schuh



Cartoon from "The Windsor Report"  
at [www.wibsite.com/features/windsorreport](http://www.wibsite.com/features/windsorreport)

## CHANGING ATTITUDE

The Windsor report gives Changing Attitude powerful encouragement to go on engaging with the Anglican Communion, presenting the rich experience of lesbian and gay people and our need to be treated as equals. Archbishop Robin Eames reminded the Communion that we have [to] live in relationship with one another across our differences.

The report reprints the texts of resolutions from the Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988 and 1998 dealing with homosexuality. The first two refer to the need for 'deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality' and encouraged dialogue with those who are homosexual. The 1998 resolution 'requested the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us' and 'to listen to the experience of homosexual persons'. No action has

been taken across the Communion since 1976 to put these resolutions into effect. All three Resolutions apply at this time, said Robin Eames – but the debate called for in '78, '88 and '98 still has to happen.

The Windsor report provides powerful encouragement for this process to begin, now. Section 146 reminds 'all in the Communion that Lambeth resolution I.10 calls for the ongoing process of listening and discernment, and that Christians of good will need to be prepared to engage honestly and frankly with each other on issues relating to human sexuality.'

Later, the same section 'recognises that debate on this issue cannot be closed whilst sincerely but radically different positions continue to be held across the Communion'. It 'urges Provinces to be pro-active in support of the call of Lambeth Resolution 64 (1988) for them to "reassess, in the light of ... study and because of our concern for human rights, its care for and attitude towards persons of homosexual orientation'."

Section 145 urges 'all provinces that are engaged in processes of discernment regarding the blessing of same sex unions to engage the Communion in continuing study of biblical and theological rationale for and against such unions'.

The way in which the report is received and the action that individual bishops and Provinces choose to take will determine whether the Communion now has the confidence to begin this dialogue.

The report does not demand the expulsion of the Episcopal Church in the United States, as had been widely expected (and desired by conservatives) nor the resignation of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire. Any recommendation that the church should institute a course of discipline and punishment would have been problematic, said Robin Eames. He said emphatically, that punishment should not be imposed but we should behave as mature Christians. Although the report suggests that ECUSA might issue an expression of regret for actions breaking the bonds of affection, "we should put our common life together first under God".

The report recommends the creation of a new Council of Advice for the Archbishop of Canterbury

and the creation and adoption of an Anglican Covenant. The Covenant would make 'explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection ... between the churches of the Communion' and deal with matters of common identity, relationships, commitments and the management of Communion affairs. Robin Eames seemed open about the possibility of this or some alternative structure coming into being. It will take a number of years to formulate and agree. Meanwhile, whatever future innovations might be brought before the Covenant for discernment and decision, parts of the Communion are already ordaining women priests and bishops, although this is not yet received even by a majority of Provinces within the Communion. Some Provinces, not only ECUSA and Canada, are already ordaining both lesbian and gay priests and bishops, including some who are partnered. The only difference following Gene Robinson's ordination is that one Province has now done this openly and through due canonical process.

*no good thing  
will God  
withhold from  
those who walk  
with integrity.  
Balm 84*

At the press conference in the crypt of St Paul's, Archbishop Robin Eames said that the report is not the ultimate answer but points the way ahead. Reconciliation cannot be achieved at the expense of truth. It places responsibility on both sides. Changing Attitude accepts the need to understand the very different practical and pastoral requirements needed for the church in a Province such as Nigeria, where the cultural and social norms are very different from the UK. We will hope

that within the positive expectations of the report, Provinces for which lesbian and gay sexuality does not at present seem to be a live issue, will understand that for us, it is. The Church of England needs to continue working towards full inclusion for lesbian and gay people, lay and ordained, including the blessing of our relationships and the ordination of clergy living in committed same-sex relationships.

There was one more powerful emphasis from Robin Eames at the press conference – he stated with great emphasis that there is no room for homophobia within the church. Parts of our Communion need help in understanding how they are being homophobic – prejudiced in their attitudes towards lesbian and gay

people – when they think they are expressing fundamental Christian truths.

We now have to wait and see how the church implements the recommendations of the Windsor report. Changing Attitude has been given a powerful new mandate to bring our expertise, wisdom and personal experience to those Provinces opposed to the full inclusion of lesbian and gay people. We have the resources to help facilitate the deep and dispassionate study and dialogue called for at Lambeth 1978. We will do this working with Inclusive Church in the UK, and with our sister organisations in America, Canada, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa and Uganda.

<http://www.changingattitude.org>

We meet for worship and fellowship on the first Sunday of every month at

St. Paul's Anglican Church (West End)  
1130 Jervis Street  
Vancouver, BC  
at 7 pm

## INSTITUTION OVER INSPIRATION?

In a thoughtful, critical response to the Windsor Report, Paul Marshall (Bishop of Bethlehem, PA) expresses dismay at the church's resolute focus on saving itself. Religious movements, he notes, begin with radical disturbance of the status quo.

"While I am glad this report recommends no draconian actions against anyone, I am still deeply saddened by it. I perceive water meeting oil: an essentially institutional response to what claims to be prophetic movement."

"In total disregard of 30 years of public discourse and more than 50 years of academic writing, the report states that insufficient formal theological work has occurred on the issue of human sexuality . . . There is nowhere expressed concern for the possibility, however faint, that insufficient reading and thinking has occurred on the part of those not now open to change in this area. I recognize that the burden of proof lies with us who wish to see change; there is nonetheless a responsibility on the part of the rest to at least read the newspapers."

"Most sadly of all, as occurred even at our own diocesan convention last weekend, gay and lesbian persons are spoken of as though they are not in the room. A statement that gays and lesbians should not be hated or murdered does not atone for a lack of any recognition that gay and lesbian persons' experience in Christ is generative of any theology that must be taken into account by the majority or that their experience in any way legitimately serves to criticize the status quo."

<http://www.thewitness.org/agw/marshall101904.html>

## CLOSE FRIEND OF GOD GOES ON THE RECORD

Desmond Tutu, the former Archbishop of Cape Town and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, has lent his name to the fight against homophobia in Africa and around the world. The prominent South African says homophobia is a "crime against humanity" and "every bit unjust" as apartheid.

The former head of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa made these statements at the launching of the book *Sex, Love & Homophobia*, published last week by Amnesty International UK. Tutu has written the foreword to the human rights group's book. Yet, all over the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are persecuted, writes Archbishop Tutu. "We treat them as pariahs and push them outside our communities. We make them doubt that they too are children of God – and this must be nearly the ultimate blasphemy. We blame them for what they are."

He also regrets the dominant view among his church colleagues. "Churches say that the expression of love in a heterosexual monogamous relationship includes the physical, the touching, embracing, kissing, the genital act – the totality of our love makes each of us grow to become increasingly godlike and compassionate. If this is so for the heterosexual, what earthly reason have we to say that it is not the case with the homosexual?"

For Archbishop Tutu, these "destructive forces" of "hatred and prejudice" are an evil. "A parent who brings up a child to be a racist damages that child, damages the community in which they live, damages our hopes for a better world. A parent who teaches a child that there is only one sexual orientation and that anything else is evil denies our humanity and their own too."

*Afrol News, 7 July 2004*

## NOT THE SOFT OPTION

The ability of the church to ignore the deeper implications of its own scriptures is horribly plain throughout history. Remember it took 18 centuries for Christians to realise that slavery is against the Gospel. Remember that those who supported slavery claimed to do so on biblical grounds . . . remember too that Jesus was condemned to death for his own inclusive attitudes by fundamentalist zealots who believed that they were obeying scripture.

In all these cases those who opposed change could quote the Bible in their defence. With hindsight the church sees that they were wrong; they were killing the spirit with the letter . . . In the same way the church will one day look back on the issues that divide us today and find it incredible that it once thought it right and 'scriptural' to treat women and other minorities as it does now.

The struggle to make the church inclusive is not based on some secular, woolly 'liberal agenda' (the charge endlessly parroted against us) but on a scriptural imperative to do what Jesus did. It is the same struggle to oppose prejudice, bigotry and oppression and open the kingdom to everyone, especially the most marginalised.

Inclusivity is not a soft option. It is harder to live in a truly diverse and welcoming community than it is to live in a community of the respectably like-minded, just as it is harder to be an intelligent student of scripture than it is to be a fundamentalist . . . All of us must be challenged and changed in every department of our life, by the Gospel and by one another, whether we are male or female, black or white, gay or straight, rich or poor.

*Rt. Rev. Jeffrey John*

## 'COMFORTABLE WORDS' FROM OUR NEW CHAPLAIN

One of the things that has bothered me most about what has happened in this diocese around the blessing of same-sex unions has been my own muting of my feelings. It has felt inappropriate for me to express the deep sense of hope and joy that our

decisions have given me, and, frankly, I have resented that. I want to begin what I have to say here by expressing some of those feelings now.

It is my belief and experience that everything we are doing around the blessing of same-sex unions in the Diocese of New Westminster is a response to a call from God's Spirit. It is the Spirit of Christ among us that is leading and empowering the work we are doing for it is a work of justice and compassion, a work for the healing of the world. For many of the writers of the New Testament, the coming of the Kingdom and the reception of the Spirit are different ways of talking about the same thing, the disciple's highest good. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" – "Ask for the Holy Spirit and you will receive Her." As my favorite theologian, James D. G. Dunn, puts it, "The Spirit enables the Christian to experience the future kingdom of God in the present." Even now, in the midst of all the evil and suffering in the world, the kingdom of God is breaking in. Even now, despite all the disputes in the church and in society around sexual orientation, the kingdom of God is breaking in among us. We in this diocese are experiencing nothing less than the future kingdom of God now, here, in this place, at this present moment.

As Christians we are called to live out these truths in our own lives and to live into the vision of a world of justice and peace and mutuality and compassion and love and understanding. A world where everyone is treated as a reflection of the God in whose image we have been made. A world where swords are turned into plowshares. A world where the lion and the lamb lie down together. The Holy Spirit's job is to uphold and empower us to do this work and to fill us with Her gifts. The joy that so many of us concerned with these issues have been experiencing recently in this diocese attests to the Spirit's presence among us.

As little as ten years ago, who would have dared to think that what we are experiencing around the issues of sexual orientation could happen in our lifetime! How wonderful that it is happening now! How amazing that we can be a part of it! Thanks be to God!

Despite my charismatic moments, I am clearly aware that many Anglicans – not to say many Christians, perhaps even the majority – are deeply offended by what others of us see as causes for rejoicing. This is a large part of the reasons for the muting of feelings about this issue that I referred to above. Wishing to show

respect and acceptance for alternative forms of Christianity and desiring to live the inclusiveness that we preach while yet rejoicing in and encouraged by what is happening among us on this issue, many of us stand paralyzed, pulled in different directions by different feelings, like the ass who was caught between two piles of hay and, not knowing which way to turn, starved to death.

I must confess that part of me merely wants to say, "Welcome to the 21st Century!"

What we are experiencing in the church around the issue of sexual orientation is happening everywhere, in every field, on every continent, in every society, over a huge range of issues. Peter Berger has said that "our situation is characterized by a market of world views, simultaneously in competition with each other. In this situation the maintenance of any certitudes that go much beyond the empirical necessities of the society and the individual to function is very difficult indeed." Others have pointed to movements that deny "the possibility of objective knowledge of the real world, 'univocal'

(single or primary) meaning of words and texts, the unity of the human self, the cogency of the distinctions between rational inquiry and political action, literal and metaphorical meaning, science and art, and even the possibility of truth itself." ("Introduction" to *From Modernism to Postmodernism*) Reality is, indeed, stranger than it used to be. Just look around. Things are no crazier in the church than anywhere else in our contemporary society.

I have found three books particularly useful in my search for ways of moving toward solutions to the issues that face us both inside and outside the church and I commend them to you. James D. G. Dunn has written a book about the character of earliest Christianity called *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*. Dunn maintains that the only thing all the writings of the New Testament have in common is a conviction that the man Jesus and the risen Lord are the same person and that this "canon within the canon" marks out both the center and the circumference of Christianity even today. In his book, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan explores the literatures on parenting, partnering, learning, therapy, work, and leadership, and shows that about 65% of the adults in our society are "in over their heads," not completely comfortable with or capable of the demands that modern life places upon them. Jorge N. Ferrer, in *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, advances the view that "no pre-given ultimate reality exists, and that different spiritual ultimates can be enacted through intentional or spontaneous creative participation in an indeterminate spiritual power or Mystery."


It is not an easy thing to be able to remain grounded in the truth of the Gospel as we understand it and yet remain open, accepting, and loving to other people who have different ways of being Christian and/or of being human in this world. This is especially so when our own understanding and convictions are being attacked. It is not an easy thing to do – but unless we learn how, and quickly, life as we know it on this planet may soon be over. I don't really believe God wants that – do you? *The Rev. Bob Korth*  
Chaplain to Integrity Vancouver

© 2004 (Newsletter) Integrity Vancouver (Friendship Society)

Produced by



FarSeeing  
Bunny Press



**Integrity/Vancouver  
welcomes you  
Join! Donate! Get on our  
mailing list!**

---

NAME

---

ADDRESS

---

CITY AND POSTCODE

---

<p><b>TEL</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I want to be a member</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I'll keep Integrity/Vancouver and its work in my prayers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I'd like to make a donation</p>	<p><b>EMAIL</b></p>
--	---------------------

**Tax-deductible donations gratefully received**  
**P.O. Box 2797 Main PO**  
**Vancouver, BC**  
**(604) 432-1230**  
**www.vancouver.integritycanada.ca**