A MESSAGE FROM THE LESBIAN & GAY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

Two classes of Church citizenship?

"We were never tried. We were just held in detention indefinitely. My friend decided that he would help us. He bribed a policeman so that we could escape. The policeman 'forgot' to put shackles on us one morning so when we went to empty the toilet bucket we were able to escape."

A reader might be forgiven for thinking that account dated to the 'underground railway' of the 1830s that helped slaves in the American South flee to safety in free states. Sadly, it is not. The tale is contemporary.

For many in the world, freedom is still a dream. This account is from an International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission report on a Bill going through Nigeria's parliament which would silence virtually any public discussion of lesbian and gay lives and relationships. Gay sex is already illegal. *"If the Bill is passed, life would be horrible,"* warned another contributor. *"Discrimination and violence will increase."*

Shamefully the Anglican Primate of Nigeria, **Peter Akinola**, has promoted this legislation, condemned by UN officials as *"an absolutely unjustified intrusion of individuals' right to privacy"* which goes against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In Archbishop Akinola's view, "*homosexuality is flagrant disobedience to God"*, and an *"acquired aberration"* which *"does violence to nature"*.

This is far removed from Jesus's teaching of loving one's neighbour as oneself. It is also not in line with various **Lambeth Conference** resolutions, including the call in 1998 *"to listen to the experience of homosexual persons"* and *"minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation"*, or the Windsor Report's view that *"any demonising of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment, is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care"*. Yet other Primates have not publicly urged him to repent. However they have threatened The Episcopal Church that its full participation in the Communion may be affected if bishops uphold equality for all.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the Anglican communion was in turmoil and threatening to break apart. Should it support the end to the slave trade? Some said 'no' and turned to The Bible for justification. But just as the Church was able to search its soul and overcome this to support the abolition of slavery, it ought to be able to support justice and inclusion for lesbian and gay people.

Difficult choices must be faced. Bishop **Andrew Smith** of Connecticut said, while he 'greatly valued' his relationships with members of the Anglican Communion who disagreed with his position, "*We can't advocate two classes of church citizenship: one for heterosexuals, one for homosexuals"*. And freedom in all provinces to witness to God's generous love is being undermined.

Church of England bishops recently moved an amendment toning down a Synod motion, for fear of "doing anything that could be perceived as the Church of England qualifying its commitment to the entirety of the relevant Lambeth Conference resolutions".

This debate is held against a global backdrop where over fifty countries impose jail sentences, including life imprisonment, for homosexuality. In nine other countries the punishment is death! In most countries lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face daily violence and harassment. The Church must ask itself what part it plays in encouraging this disgrace.

If maintaining the 'catholic' nature of the Anglican Communion can only be bought at the price of silence and collusion with such calumnies, this is not true catholicity in Christ.

The recent Primates meeting could and should have declared its complete opposition to this legislation. That it failed to do so brings both the Primates and the wider Anglican Communion into serious disrepute since it has clearly turned its back on defending a fundamental human right – in spite of successive Lambeth Conferences clearly requiring it to do so.

Has the spiritual health of our Communion sunk so low that a Primates' meeting spends days preparing to outlaw the blessings of our loving relationships in America, while disregarding such actual and imminent threats to our lives and liberty?

SOURCES: www.sodomylaws.org | www.iglhrc.org/files/iglhrc/reports/Voices_Nigeria.pdf | http://www.unhchr.ch/huricane/huricane.nsf/view01/A8F5CC6EAC2D6C52C125728B0054CD9B?opendocument

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE - 21 April 2007

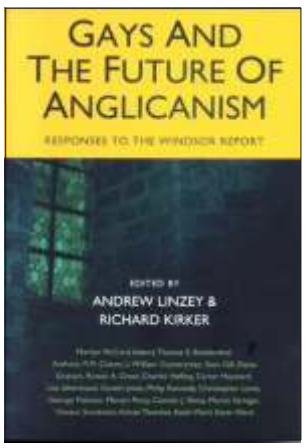
With The Reverend Professor Marilyn McCord Adams

"Leaven in the Lump of Lambeth: Spiritual Temptations, Ecclesial Opportunities"

Marilyn McCord Adams is Regius Professor of Divinity and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. An American ordained in the Episcopal Church, she became involved in LCGM issues when she worked in a Hollywood church in the 80's. She has been an activist committed to uprooting the sex and gender taboos in church and society ever since. She taught philosophy of religion and medieval philosophy at UCLA for 21 years, and historical and philosophical theology at Yale Divinity School for ten years.

"Christian action to end oppression – civil or ecclesial – must grow out of our fundamental vocation to stand up to our full stature in Christ. Like the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King, Jr, like the anti-apartheid movement under Archbishop Tutu, our efforts call for distinctive spiritual disciplines that are sure to bear fruit."

Venue: St Alban's Centre, Baldwin Gardens, Holborn, LONDON EC1



Gays and the Future of Anglicanism:

Responses to the Windsor Report

Andrew Linzey & Richard Kirker
O Books
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Soft Cover

The Windsor Report has divided the Anglican Communion. Its view that the Episcopal Church and the Church of Canada should toe the line on gays or 'walk away' is precipitating schism. Yet, Windsor's recommendations have no juridical or binding authority, indeed they haven't even been approved by the autonomous churches of the Anglican Communion. More importantly still: Windsor is open to a range of fundamental theological challenges. In this book 22 leading theologians question its assumptions, expose its inadequate theology, and argues that living with diversity is the historic Anglican position. There is no other book that explains why we are in the mess we are.

LESBIAN & GAY CHRISTIANS
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