



OneBodyOneFaith

Affirming sexuality and gender in Christ

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury
Lambeth Palace
LONDON SE1 7JU

Dear Archbishop Justin,

We are writing to express our sadness and disappointment at your decision to dis-invite the same-sex partners of bishops attending the Lambeth conference. In particular, the way in which this has been communicated alongside an image of yourself and Mrs Welby on the Conference website, as part of a message of welcome and anticipation, has caused deep offence and hurt. Although the crass and insensitive link 'excluding same-sex spouses' has we note been removed, this has not prevented the earlier version of the page being disseminated widely, not least within the LGBT media whose attitudes are understandably becoming increasingly entrenched against the Christian message. This we deeply regret.

We are sure that individual bishops will already have communicated their feelings to you during your conversations and we do not seek to speak for them, but we do want to convey the impact of this decision on members of our community, and within those provinces who have accepted and welcomed the gifts which loving relationships bring to the church regardless of the gender of the people doing the loving. An intentional decision has been made to place spouses at the heart of this conference, and an intentional decision has been made to exclude some on the basis of gender. A welcome has been extended to all, and that welcome has been explicitly withdrawn from some.

Last week we were both at General Synod when members of the Pastoral Advisory Group of widely divergent perspectives offered us a 'living letter' and united behind Pastoral Principles which identified hypocrisy and secrecy as amongst the pervasive evils that have characterised our engagement with one another for too long. We believe we are called to name these evils at work in what we observe of the Lambeth conference preparations; in the withdrawal of invitations to those seeking to live out their faith authentically and to witness to our loving God in their open love for one another, in the presence of those who are remarried after a previous divorce, in the presence of those bishops whose same sex partners will also be present, but secretly, and most of all in the context of imbalances of power relationships and in sexual and gender violence in the Communion and in Canterbury against which the whole conference will take place.

The Loving in Love and Faith process which you initiated as a response of 'radical Christian inclusion' has encouraged us to reflect on wider issues of marriage, sexuality, gender and relationships, and we welcome this. However, if the first fruits of this process are to be swept aside in the preparations for Lambeth then a precious opportunity will have been lost to speak the truth of our own context, to speak of the new insights the Spirit is unfolding amongst God's people. LGBT people are continuing to pay the price for tensions within the wider Communion which are not of our making, and are increasingly not our concern. Meanwhile the world watches us and must wonder who is this Jesus, and what is this gospel we'd seek to proclaim?

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We trust that you will continue to reflect on the harm which has been done by this decision and the way in which it has communicated, and like us will be open to the possibilities of transforming that hurt and harm, even at this stage, by courageous words and compassionate action. We intend to do just that, starting with our commitment to host those un-invited spouses so they can experience the warm and generous welcome which we believe characterises the Church of England at its grass roots. This seems to us to be the very least the gospel demands of us.

Yours sincerely,



Reverend Canon Peter Leonard
Chair of Trustees



Tracey Byrne
Chief Executive

cc Rt Rev Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry
Rt Rev Christine Harding, Bishop of Newcastle
Dr Eeva John, Enabling Officer - Teaching Document and Pastoral Advisory Group
The Most Reverend Dr Thabo Magkoba, Archbishop of Southern Africa
Rt Rev Tim Thornton, Bishop at Lambeth
The Most Reverend Josiah Idowu-Fearon, Secretary-General of the Anglican Communion