

2 October 2006

The Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,
Dr. Rowan Williams
Lambeth Palace
LONDON
United Kingdom SE1 7JU

Your Grace,

It appears that the open letter has become one vehicle for conversation within our Communion concerning the place and participation of the Church's gay and lesbian members. We write to you today in the spirit of extending this conversation, prompted by the recent circulation on the web of a letter to you from an "ex-gay" Anglican group in Canada in response to a recent interview you gave, though we would have been glad to speak to you on any occasion that presented itself. Further, let us be clear that we have no intention to "spin" your comments, but rather to reflect upon them from our perspective.

To begin, we state our belief, as gay-affirming Anglicans, that same-sex sexual orientation has as its essential nature the intrinsically good motivation to intimate communion with another person. We have come to this belief after careful study, prayer, and dialogue, in openness to the Holy Spirit, over many decades. We therefore regard "ex-gay" attempts to change one's homosexual orientation as unnecessary. Authentic and biblical Christian faith simply does not require it.

This is not to say that sexual attitudes, impulses, and behaviours should not change – indeed, life in Christ makes change inevitable! We believe that all who bring their sexuality into their relationship with the Living God will find it transformed to be ever more life-giving for self and other. This is what our faith journey has revealed to us, heterosexual and homosexual alike. We therefore support our General Synod's affirmation of the "integrity and sanctity" of committed same-sex relationships.

We recognize, however, that others' journeys may take them into ex-gay groups or programs, and among us are many for whom this was one leg of the journey to becoming gay-affirming. We would be remiss, however, if we did not acknowledge the scientific evidence that programs aimed at "re-orientation" have not demonstrated efficacy and, perhaps more importantly, the testimony of those whose experiences in such programs were far from benign. We offer the particular experience of our friends in the UK group Courage, at one time your nation's

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leading ex-gay ministry. According to the group's founder, after fourteen years of attempting to change the sexual orientation of its members, it was "quite obvious that the conservative Christian approach to homosexuality not only fails to produce the promised results, but has a very destructive effect on the lives of many gay people and their families and an extremely corrosive effect on their faith in Christ." Courage now focuses its work on helping gay Christians to integrate their faith and their homosexuality.

We do not prejudge that all people who desire to become "ex-gay" will eventually become "ex-ex-gay", nor that their faith or well-being will necessarily be diminished in the attempt. We, in Integrity Canada, do have a special concern for those who feel led by the Holy Spirit to affirm their homosexuality and to embrace the wholeness offered to all of God's children in Jesus Christ, and consequently we offer our friendship and support during what might be for them a challenging change. In the end, regardless of what they come to know their sexual orientation to be, we have the same hope for every person: to be authentic, to love, and be loved.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. We recognize the burdens upon you in your role as Archbishop of Canterbury, and we keep you always in our prayers.

Yours in Christ, for the people of Integrity Canada,

Steve Schuh, President
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Diocese of New Westminster

Canon Elizabeth St. Clair Stewart
Victoria, British Columbia
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