

## Vermont Parishes Object to Homophobic Church Declaration

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this does not simply mean blessing same-sex marriage or ordaining non-celibate gay or lesbian priests in committed relationships. Full inclusion refers to every aspect of evangelical life from baptism to holding office.

The Vermont positions respond to conclusions of the Lambeth conference in Canterbury, England in August 1998. Held once a decade, the conference brings the Bishops of the Anglican Communion around the world together to pray, study and interpret scripture and the faith. Meetings and hearings on human sexuality issues were part of this year's agenda.

But proceedings were biased from the beginning. Originally scheduled for a neutral location, they were moved to the premises of the ultra-conservative American Anglican Congress. Lesbian and gay Anglican witnesses were disinvited and replaced with members and "converts" of ex-gay ministries. Other evidence was limited to biased materials depicting homosexuality as depravity and disease. Several bishops compared lifelong homosexual unions to bestiality. A Nigerian bishop physically assaulted Rev. Richard Kirker of The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, ostensibly to exorcise his "satanic perversion."

The strongest opposition came from African states using gays as scapegoats in desperate competition for converts and from traditionally right-wing regions of the US and the world.

Lobbying at Lambeth was surprisingly intense. Rhode Island's Rev. Jan Nunley said, "It is not the lobbying that bothered me; it was

the scale. I never thought I'd see the day when the Body of Christ needed campaign finance reform."

Gays and lesbians did have some defenders. Michael Gay Bourke of Wolverham noted that "the Bible can be used both as a source of faith and as a way to oppress people." New York's Cathy Roskam protested addition of the phrase "while rejecting homosexual practice as

incompatible with scripture" to the resolution.

"We will have a divided church if this amendment passes," said Roskam. "If affirming homosexuality is evangelical suicide in Central and East Africa, to condemn it is evangelical suicide in my region."

But of the more liberal voices present, few spoke up for gays. In the end, the bishops of the Anglican Communion voted 576

to 70 to condemn homosexuality. Kim Byham of Episcopalian lesbian ministry Integrity later said, "In 20-20 hindsight, [gays] got taken, and they were totally unprepared for it."

The resolution was a step back for advocates of gay and lesbian rights. While some Christian religions such as the Methodist and Presbyterian churches allege that Christianity and homosexual practice are incompatible, the

Episcopal church had not until this resolution.

The Vermont Resolution is not the first negative reaction to Lambeth. Following the vote, almost 60 percent of diocesan bishops — including Vermont's McLeod — signed a pastoral statement to lesbians and gays. It apologized for the inadequacies of the conference hearings and pledged to work towards full inclusion for homosexuals. ▼

### The August 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution on Human Sexuality

The resolution as passed states:

A. commends to the church the subsection report on human sexuality;

B. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those not called to marriage;

C. recognizes that there are amongst us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the church and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ.

D. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage, and any trivialisation or commercialization of sex;

E. cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions.

Among the rejected amendments — all proposed by various African regions — were those equating homosexuality with promiscuity and sexual brokenness, emphasizing Biblical sanction of heterosexuality and condemnation of homosexuality, mentioning 19th-century Ugandan executions for refusing homosexual relations with the king and stating that homosexuality is "a sin which could only be adopted if the church wanted to commit evangelical suicide." All were rejected

FROM THE VERMONT ANNUAL CONVENTION, NOV 1998

### A Resolution Concerning Deeper Understanding of Scripture, Tradition and Reason in Relationship to Human Sexuality

Resolved, That the 165th Convention of the Diocese of Vermont affirm Section (c) of Resolution 1.10, passed at the 13th Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops --- inasmuch as it recognizes the presence among us of persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation and commits us to listen to the experience of homosexual persons, remembering that we are all loved by God and that all baptized, believing, and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That in the light of the traditional Anglican reliance on Scripture, tradition, and reason for the discernment of God's will in our lives, this Convention reject as too limited a reading of biblical texts that portion of (d) "rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture."

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be sent to our primate, the Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, with the request that it be shared with the Anglican Consultative Council in accordance with the clause (f) of the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10 on sexuality.

## High School Student Produces Gay-Themed Play

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13 when she had me. I always knew — no regrets.

**OITM:** Do you have any curiosity about meeting your biological mother?

**CM:** Yeah, but I wouldn't do it unless my mom was totally ready.

**OITM:** You mean your adoptive mom?

**CM:** Yeah, she'd really have to be 'there,' you know? I mean she really is my mom and I wouldn't want to make her feel bad.

**OITM:** You said your mom and dad aren't together anymore?

**CM:** Yeah, they're divorced. I had this really weird year when I was just turning 15. Within four months I had my first girlfriend, my parents split up, my dad made a suicide attempt, and my house burned.

**OITM:** That's intense. Did you feel like any of the stuff with your parents was related to you coming out?

**CM:** No. The house burning was kind of related to me, but it was an accident. My girlfriend and I had been smoking.

**OITM:** That's a lot of stuff.

**CM:** Yeah really.

**OITM:** Who was the first grown-up you came out to?

**CM:** My friend's mom. She was really open and cool. She was like a second mother. Then I told my dad. I said, "Dad, I think I might like girls." He said, "Oh. Well, I like girls too." That was it.

**OITM:** Did he get it— what you meant?

**CM:** Yeah, totally. It was okay, although my step-mother did once say to me that if my step-sister turned out to be gay she would blame me. They even almost didn't get married because of it— because of me and the gay thing.

**OITM:** Was it tougher to talk to your mom?

**CM:** Yeah. Kind of. She is a little more conservative than my dad. I told her the wrong way. I told her during an argument, just like they say you should never do. I suddenly announced, "I'm not a virgin and I have a girlfriend. I had sex with a boy in 7th grade." My mom seemed stunned but tried to cover it up. She was like, "Uh, uh, I knew that. Yeah. I knew that." She didn't know.

**OITM:** You've been kind of an activist?

**CM:** Yeah, I'm part of Youth Aware. A group of us talked to Governor Dean about school harassment. It's really bad. There

are a lot of different angles to it.

**OITM:** Have you experienced harassment in school?

**CM:** Well, when I was going to Mount Abe, the principal was really horrible — in my opinion. I was walking down the hall holding hands with my girlfriend, and he said, "You can't do that. Stop that. Someone might, well, see that." I mean we were just holding hands. Lots of stuff like that.

**OITM:** You said there are lots of different angles?

**CM:** Yeah, things people don't think about. Like the way straight kids use anti-gay slang. Calling each other 'faggot' and stuff.

**OITM:** Yeah I've seen that, like where one straight guy is calling another straight guy 'faggot,' basically a street way of saying, "What's up?"

**CM:** Yeah, like that. ...or calling each other faggot if they're pissed off at each other. What kind of a climate does that make for the gay kid who is standing there hearing this?

**OITM:** Yeah, and I suppose someone could argue that since the gay student isn't part of the interaction — it isn't really harassment of that student.

**CM:** Exactly.

**OITM:** You seem to feel accepted by the gblt community and be really comfortable.

**CM:** (Looking perplexed) Yeah...

**OITM:** For people who are 10 or 20 years older than you...often bisexual people don't really feel accepted in either the straight world or the gblt community.

**CM:** Oh, that.

**OITM:** What do you think about the assumption that a bisexual person could never be faithful, for instance?

**CM:** Oh, I hate that. If I said I was just going to be with one person, I'd be with that person. The thing is though, I think I would prefer an open relationship, but I'd be honest about it right from the start.

**OITM:** So what would you say to a lesbian who wouldn't want to date you because you might cheat on her with a guy?

**CM:** Frankly, I don't think I would ever want to date someone who felt that way. I want to get over my feelings of jealousy and ownership about people. I don't believe in that gender-free love thing either. I AM attracted to the differ-

ences, to male and female bodies.

**OITM:** It sounds like your experience of being a bisexual person in the community has been pretty positive.

**CM:** Yeah, it's almost trendy. (laughs) My biggest concerns have been with issues of harassment and discrimination for the youth of the GLBT community.

**OITM:** What do you think are the hot issues right now for young GLBT people in Vermont?

**CM:** AIDS, safe-sex education, safety at school. My health class teacher was a lesbian and she never brought up using latex gloves, or dental dams.

**OITM:** If you had to give any advice to people out there in the larger Vermont community, what would it be?

**CM:** Other high schools should follow A.R.T.'s example and mainstream homosexuality. There's a rich gay history available and we're not using it. We're still not getting it.

**OITM:** So, for you personally — what's next?

**CM:** Well, I'm applying to colleges. I'm applying to a prestigious all-girl's college. (She gins in mock innocence) I have my reasons. ▼