



THE DIOCESE
OF COLORADO
The Right Reverend
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Sept. 27, 2011

Dear Friends,

Since writing you recently regarding my decision to offer pastoral provision for the blessing of same-gender relationships, it has come to my attention that a little more specificity might be helpful. We did, after all, cover a lot of ground in our conversation during last May's Clergy Conference, and I want to be sure that we are all clearly on the same page.

Although I believe my recent letter captured the spirit of that discussion accurately, I realize that some greater clarification might be useful. So let me unpack two key paragraphs from that letter.

First, in my letter to you of the 19th I wrote:

"I realize that when it comes to issues of human sexuality and faith, we are a Church that embodies differing essential viewpoints—ones that are well established with long histories, as well as ones that are emergent and innovative. "

In order to establish the kind of space in which people on all sides of the issues of human sexuality can hold one another in clear pastoral regard, it is important to acknowledge honestly that there are essentially two views within our Church regarding same-gender blessings—one that is established and one that is emergent. Given the great range of views on the subject, along with the attendant nuances and qualifications of all those views, identifying "two essential views" represents a distinct over-simplification. Nonetheless, it is important that we collectively recognize that those who hold to either of these two views are taking positions that they understand to be both biblically based and principled.

Second, in my previous letter I also stated:

"To all of you, wherever you find yourself across the spectrum of our common life, please be assured that you have my continued and full support—in respecting the integrity of your convictions, in the free and full exercise of your vocation in community, in matters of discernment and deployment, in my own willingness to learn from and be formed by you, and in your active participation in all levels of leadership in our diocesan life."

My objective in making this statement is two-fold—first, to assure individuals and congregations that they will continue to be allowed to faithfully exercise their conscience; and second, to invite our continued and deepened collective commitment and engagement by everyone across the theological spectrum to our common mission.

Toleration—in the sense of polite indifference and non-accountability—is not the objective. Engagement is. In the Summary of the Law, we are invited and challenged to love God with all of our Self—heart, body, mind, and soul. The same principle applies to our life as the Body of Christ. Our collective ministry is in fact dependent on each one of us being able and willing to bring all of who we are to the table freely to inform, and to be divinely formed by, our common

life. As the chief pastor of this diocese, I welcome, encourage, and wish to support the full breadth of faithful understanding and expressions of ministry among us.


Therefore, even as I am now making pastoral provision for the blessing of same-gender relationships in those congregations who discern that this is consistent with their calling, let me also reiterate more specifically a few additional things that I said at our Clergy Conference—all of which I have articulated previously many times over and have practiced now for the past eight years:

- That Lambeth Resolution 1.10 from the 1998 Lambeth Conference is a legitimate theological position regarding human sexuality, that it is the stated majority position of the Anglican Communion, and that it is respected in this diocese;
- That clergy and congregations who adhere to the historical and established views regarding marriage have my support;
- That all congregations in transition have my continued support to call clergy who are compatible with the theological position of that particular community;
- That congregations who desire to use the traditional liturgies of the Church may continue to do so freely;
- That people across the theological spectrum—conservative and liberal—will be invited and included into all levels of leadership within the diocese;
- That those who wish to restrict their financial support of the wider Church for reasons of conscience, will be able to do so under newly developed guidelines for “redirected giving” that will be formulated with a representative group of diocesan leaders in consultation with me.

I hope that these few amplifications and clarifications of my earlier letter are helpful. In addition to these specifics, please do keep in mind the significant pastoral theology that continues to inform and shape our life in community—that transcendent way of being in relationship to which we are called as brothers and sisters in Christ and of which we have spoken so frequently. Be assured of my continued gratitude for your leadership and for my continued prayer for our work together.

God’s peace and blessing be with you.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Reverend Robert O’Neill
Bishop