

## Letter to the Bishop of St Albans

Date : 18 May 2004

Source : Church Society

The following letter was sent by a number of members of the Diocese of St. Albans to the Bishop. Many other members had written individually.

Rt Rev C Herbert  
Abbey Gate House  
Abbey Mill Lane  
St Albans  
AL3 4HD

11th May 2004

Dear Bishop Christopher

It was with considerable disappointment and great sadness that we heard the news that Canon Jeffrey John had been appointed as Dean of St Albans cathedral.

We have a number of serious concerns.

1. The teaching of Canon John on human sexuality is clearly out of step with and contradictory to the clear and plain teaching of the Scriptures, the public teaching of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. The Church of England affirms that the Scriptures are 'God's word written', the word by which God rules his church so that 'it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is contrary' to that word. (Article 20). He has been appointed to a significant and high profile position of leadership and teaching within the Diocese yet we are aware that in his teaching Canon John has publicly advocated views and patterns of conduct wholly incompatible with the Scriptures and with the understanding of the vast majority of Christians historically, ecumenically and internationally. Indeed he did so very publicly at the press conference on Monday 19 April. We understand that Canon John has given certain undertakings about his lifestyle however the primary issue is his teaching. His views are so far out of step as to render his appointment unacceptable and provocative. We fail to see how this can be anything other than deeply divisive within the Diocese and cause particular dismay to Anglican Christians in Africa, Asia, South America and beyond.

2. Last summer you wrote to the clergy of the Diocese encouraging us to 'wait with patience and humility' and 'to repent of and renounce all forms of bullying'. We listened carefully to those words and did not take issue in this Diocese over events in Oxford. We therefore find this appointment precipitate and provocative, not least since your encouragement to wait with patience was echoed by Archbishop Rowan Williams in establishing the Lambeth Commission process. We can only express our deep disappointment that you have chosen not to wait. We confess that we are further

puzzled by your most recent letter which calls on us 'to simply pray' while you have already chosen what appears a provocative and divisive course.

We do understand that your decision will have been a difficult and lonely one but regrettably we believe it to be wrong.

3. Given your decision and your warm endorsement of Jeffrey John as a teacher it appears that as our Bishop you are now endorsing his teaching on same sex unions and his promotion of same sex blessings. It would be very helpful if you were able to clarify your position on these issues.

In conclusion we wish to express our sadness at what has happened. It will inevitably have consequences and will damage relationships but for us it is a matter of conviction and of the authority of the Scriptures over our lives and our church. In the light of this and for the sake of the unity of the Diocese and the Anglican Communion we request that this appointment is withdrawn.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you personally.

with our prayer for all concerned in this matter and the renewing of all God's people

List of signatories attached

Signatories:

Peter Ackroyd (St. Mary the Virgin, Wootton)  
John Aldis (St. Mary's, Watford)  
David Alexander (St. Thomas, Stopsley)  
Dennis Bannard-Smith (Pavenham, St. Peter - NSM)  
Laurence Biggs (St. Giles, Codicote)  
David Bourne (All Saints Riseley)  
Denis Cole (St. Andrew's Chorleywood - Reader)  
Gavin Collins (Christ Church, Chorleywood)  
Joy Daniel (St Andrew, Woodside)  
Charles Dobbie (Holy Trinity, Lyonsdown)  
Simon Dust (Christ Church, Bushmead)  
Jos Drummond (St. Albans - licensed to officiate)  
Henry Faulkner (Retired)  
Kevin Fitzgibbon (St. Mary, Eaton Socon)  
Tony Gorton (St Peter, North Watford - Curate)  
David Heath-Whyte (Holy Trinity, Frogmore)  
Norman Holden (Stodden Churches - NSM)  
Will Hunter-Smart (St. Mary's Watford - Curate)  
Jonathan Kissell (St Peter's, Stevenage)  
David Miller (Eaton Socon - Stipendiary Lay Minister)  
Mike Newbon (St. Francis, Luton)  
Carol Ormond (Odell, All Saints - lay)  
Brian Penfold (St. James, New Barnet)  
David Phillips (Church Society & General Synod)  
Malcolm Pritchard (St Matthew, Luton)  
Mike Rajkovic (St Luke's, Bricket Wood)  
Matthew Sleeman (Southgate, licensed to officiate)  
James Spanner (St. Mark, Colney Heath)

Hugh Symes-Thompson (St. Peter & St. Paul, Cranfield)  
Richard Wilkins (St Luke's, Bricket Wood - Reader)  
Tony Wills (Ware, Christ Church)

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