

## **Copy of Letter Published in the Church of England Newspaper 19th February 2004.**

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Dear Sir

As an evangelical clergyman and member of General Synod, I am becoming increasingly disturbed that the variety of evangelical attitudes on homosexuality is not being adequately expressed.

From Christian Unions to Oxford University OICCU to Trinity College Bristol, I am an Evangelical. I believe in the authority of Scripture, I am passionate about the Gospel, and my greatest desire in ministry is to see people come to Christ.

But over the years I have become increasingly alarmed by the way in which Evangelicals like myself, have been told to regard homosexuality. As a result, I am no longer willing to be counted as part of the opposition to acceptance of Gay Relationships in the Church, both from my reading of Scripture, and from the damage which this stance is causing to the mission of the Gospel today.

More to the point, I am increasingly meeting Evangelicals who will say in private that they too, are no longer persuaded by the traditional line on this issue, but like myself, have been reluctant to publicly stand up and say so.

My position is drawn principally from my reading of the Bible. The most significant passage is, perhaps, Romans 1. Yet as I have read and re-read this passage I have become convinced that, far from giving us clear direction on this issue, it does not speak to the current debate at all!

Taken out of context, the verses do appear to condemn outright both gay and lesbian sexual activity.

But the context is not that of devout, homosexually orientated people, seeking to live out their lives in a way that is honouring to God, but of a rebellious, sinful people, whose only priority in life is to satisfy their own lusts and desires in 'godlessness and wickedness'.

If we believed in that approach to gay Christians, then we would have to apply the rest of Romans 1 to them as well. We would have to describe them as having become, "filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity... full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice", and we cannot describe our gay Christian brothers and sisters in Christ in this way.

I believe that there is a clear and urgent need to find a way to move forward to the acceptance, at every level of church life, of a positive gay Christian ethic of permanent, faithful, same sex partnerships.

I also believe the time has come for Evangelicals who, like me, have begun to see things

differently to stand up and speak out. We need to be willing to accept different interpretations of scripture on this issue and move on, for the sake of our gay Christian brothers and sisters and the Gospel which we hold so dear.

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General Synod No. 267