

Bishop Gene Robinson of New Hampshire

I first want to thank Ed and Bruce and Tom. They have been so true to what they were asked to do by the Presiding Bishop. They have been in close communication with me. I have felt very supported by them. They have represented me extremely well.

I want to be clear than I am not here to whine. I learned of the result of this negotiation on Friday evening. I have been in considerable pain every since.

But I want to acknowledge that I am not the first or last person to be in pain at a House of Bishops meeting.

My own pain was sufficient enough that for 36 hours I felt the compelling urge to run, to flee. My inspiration for staying came from my conservative brothers in this house. I have seen John Howe and Ed Salmon and others show up for years when there was a lot of pain for them. I see Bill Love and Mark Lawrence, and I know it is a very difficult thing for them to be here right now. For me, the worst sin is leaving the table. And that is what I was on the verge of doing. But, largely because of you, I stayed. Thank you for that.

I want to tell you why I declined the invitation as it was proposed. I really had high hopes that something might work out. I have been talking with the Anglican Communion Office for almost a year now. I got my first phone call four days before the invitations to Lambeth went out. I thought something would work out.

The offer to be hosted at the Marketplace is a non-offer. That is already available to me. One workshop on one afternoon and being interviewed by the secular press was not anything I was seeking. I wasn't going to Lambeth to have another interview with the secular press. If interviewed at all, I want to talk with a theologian. I want to talk about the love of Christ. I want to talk about the God who saved me and redeemed me and continues to live in my life. I want to talk about the Jesus I know in my life.

But my mind boggles at the misperception that this is just about gay rights. It might be in another context, but in this context it is about God's love of all of God's children. It's a theological discussion, it's not a media show. I have been most disappointed in that my desire was to participate in Bible study and small groups, and that is not being offered. It makes me wonder: if we can't sit around a table and study the Bible together, what kind of communion do we have and what are we trying to save?

I am dismayed and sickhearted that we can't sit around a table, as brothers and sisters in Christ, and study scripture together.

It has been a very difficult 48 hours sitting here and hearing your plans for Lambeth.

In my most difficult moments, it feels as if, instead of leaving the 99 sheep in search of the one, my chief pastor and shepherd, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has cut me out of the herd.

I ask two things of you. Some of you have indicated that if I am not invited, you won't go either. I want to say loud and clear - you must go. You must find your voice. And somehow you have to find my voice and the voices of all the gay and lesbian people in your diocese who, for now, don't have a voice in this setting. I'd much rather be talked to than talked about. But you must go and tell the stories of your people, faithful members of your flock who happen to be lesbian and gay.

For God's sake, don't stay away.

And second, please don't let them separate me from you. Please don't let that happen. It will be difficult, and we will have to be intentional. I know that the last thing you will need at the end of the day is another meeting just so I can catch up with you. But I hope you will be willing to stay in touch with me.

From the day I have walked into this House I have been treated with respect and welcome, even, and perhaps especially, by those of you who voted no on my consent.

I can never thank you enough for that. I will always and every moment treasure your welcome and your hospitality.

Don't let them cut me off from you.

All this is really sad for me and for my diocese. I won't have the experiences you will have, to share with them. But I will be there in the marketplace, willing to talk with anyone who wants to talk, especially with those who disagree with me. If you know me at all, you know that that's true.

Now, my focus has to change. Maybe this is what God has in mind. I had hoped to focus on the community of bishops at Lambeth, making my own contribution to its deliberations. But now, I think I will go to Lambeth thinking about gay and lesbian people around the world who will be watching what happens there. I will go to Lambeth remembering the 100 or so twenty-something's I met in Hong Kong this fall, who meet every Sunday afternoon to worship and sing God's praise in a secret catacomb of safety - because they can't be gay AND Christian in their own churches. I will be taking them to Lambeth with me. They told me that the Episcopal Church was their hope for a different, welcoming church. They told me they were counting on us. Yes, the things we do in the Episcopal Church have ramifications far, far away - and sometimes those ramifications are good.

I hope we can talk about the ways we can stay in touch in Lambeth. I will be praying for you, all the time. I know it will seem very strange, being separated from you. But we can do it if we want to. I have nothing but respect and sympathy for the Archbishop of Canterbury and the difficult place he is in. I was trying to help him, and it just didn't work.

Pray for me. I will need that. A lot.