

A Statement from
The Rt. Rev. Robert W. Ihloff,
Bishop of Maryland
in response to
The Windsor Report of the
Lambeth Commission on Communion

I am thankful for the fine work and dedication of the members of the Lambeth Commission. They have produced a thoughtful and thorough document which invites considerable study and dialogue. I applaud their understanding of the ways in which we function as a Communion and the ways they call us into fuller mutual accountability. Theirs is a truly Anglican document: it is tempered, fair, and calls us all to consider both our strengths and our shortcomings.

I am pleased that the Windsor Report calls for further dialogue and study of Holy Scripture in relationship to the matter of homosexual persons, especially those living in committed relationships. I am also in agreement that Americans in particular need to grow in an appreciation of how our local decisions impact other Anglicans and other Christian groups around the globe, and that we need much greater sensitivity to our responsibilities as members of the Catholic (universal) Church. The Report calls us all to be more accountable for our actions and words.

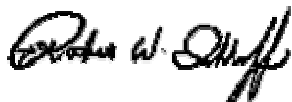
As a bishop who voted to ratify the election of The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, I apologize for the pain that vote (which I made on the basis of my reading of Scripture, as a matter of conscience, and given my understanding of our Constitution and Canons) has caused to members of the Church at home and abroad. Early in August (even before the Primates meeting in October, 2003) I made the decision not to participate in the consecration of Bishop Robinson. I did so specifically as a pastoral response to persons within this Diocese and others who were opposed to that consecration.

As a member of the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops and as one of the authors of the document cited on page 55 of the Windsor Report, I have long held that it was inappropriate for any Diocese or Province to authorize the development of rites for the blessing of same-gender unions. No such rites are or have been authorized in the Diocese of Maryland.

I am pleased that the Windsor Report reaffirms the importance of all bishops respecting diocesan and provincial boundaries. This should preclude any future inappropriate violations of diocesan and provincial boundaries. I voted for and have already implemented procedures within the Diocese of Maryland which allow for alternative pastoral care as provide by the House of Bishops last spring.

I look forward to discussing the implications of this important document with the clergy of this Diocese this month, with our Province III Bishops in November and with all Episcopal Bishops meeting in January, 2005.

Finally, I want to lend voice to the official statement of our Presiding Bishop when he states: "I am obliged to affirm the presence and positive contributions of gay and lesbian persons to every aspect of the life of our church and in all orders of ministry. Other Provinces are also blessed by the lives and ministry of homosexual persons. I regret that there are places within our Communion where it is unsafe for them to speak out of the truth of who they are." To his words, I would add that I am sorry for the pain the Windsor Report may cause gay and lesbian Christians. Their pain and the pain of persons whose theology on matters of homosexuality is traditional are precisely what bring us to our knees praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and call us into sincere dialogue so that the will of Christ may prevail in Christ's Church. I commit myself wholeheartedly to that dialogue and am determined to respect within it a variety of points of view.

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

+ Robert W. Ihloff
Bishop of Maryland