

DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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Dear Chris and Rodney

Thank you for your letter of 5th September. I am very grateful to you for taking the time to write so carefully and fully: for sharing some of the pain of the past, as well as your current anxieties; and how all this relates to the question of your belonging to the Church.

What I can say to you at the outset, without hesitation or qualification, is that you are not only welcome as part of the Church of England, whether in France or elsewhere but you both have an equal place at the table alongside every other baptized person. As a Church, we are quite clear that there can be no place for discrimination, intolerance and injustice. As you will doubtless be aware, the Church is not yet of a common mind on how sexual relations between two people outside of marriage can be expressive of the will of God and while we are still on the long journey of achieving consensus on this question, there are inevitably differences of theological emphasis and conviction. As the Archbishop of Canterbury has said, our willingness to live well with 'good disagreement' is a gift we can offer the wider world. In the light of this, I particularly appreciate the gracious way in which you acknowledge the disagreement that punctuates the life of the Anglican Communion at the moment.

What I can also tell you is that the Diocese in Europe is led by Bishop Robert who is not only sensitive to, and affirming of, the wide diversity of theological conviction across the Diocese but is committed to listening carefully to the experience of all who feel themselves subject to discrimination and exclusion.

I fully understand, given the personal history you have shared with me, how Robin's letter caused you to ask the questions you have put to me. Reading the extracts of Robin's letter you have quoted, it is clear that he has not hesitated to state his own theological convictions and where he stands on the matter of human sexuality. I recognise that his views are shared by many others across the Church of England; and, while we seek consensus, it is important that all shades of theological conviction can be expressed without restraint as we engage in a process of dialogue and debate. More importantly, from my perspective, is that Robin's letter expresses his hope of meeting

you both and getting to know you better. This strongly suggests to me that, even when expressing his convictions so unequivocally, there is no suggestion of excluding you in any way from the worshipping and sacramental life of the Church, and that Robin wants to build a pastoral relationship with you. There is no substitute for face-to-face encounters and getting to know people better with whom we have profound disagreements, if we are to model the Gospel of reconciliation to the wider world. I hope that can begin sooner rather than later.

I would like you to remind you that Lambeth Resolution 110 states unequivocally that "all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ." Since that Resolution was passed in 1998, the Church of England has moved forward considerably by continuing the process of listening and theological reflection, even if (for some) the pace of progress has been painfully slow.

You may like to know that Bishop Robert has appointed someone in the Diocese who is available to LGBTi people, particularly where they feel the need to be heard by someone with experience of, and empathy for, the specific issues that are part of their lives. If you both feel that it would be helpful at this stage, I will be very happy to put you in touch with that person.

In the meantime, please be assured of my prayers and good wishes, as well as my grateful thanks for all that you bring to the life of the Church in the Archdeaconry of France.

With every blessing

