

# ST STEPHEN'S

ANGLICAN CHURCH  
BELLEVUE HILL



"We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord,  
and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

II Corinthians 4:5

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The Honourable Mr Michael Kirby

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Friday, December 14, 2007

Dear Judge Kirby,

I am writing in response to the recent media report of an interview which you gave on Sunday Profile on ABC radio. I am an Anglican Priest in the Diocese of Sydney and I am responding primarily to the following segment of the Interview (which I have taken from the ABC Website):

*MONICA ATTARD: It certainly is. A final question on this issue though. Does it hurt you to see any level of discomfort with you and Johan?*

*MICHAEL KIRBY: I wouldn't say there's discomfort in respect of myself or Johan. It doesn't hurt me. I've been around a long time and I've seen it since I was a teenager and therefore I understand it and I understand where it comes from. Often, it has to be said, it comes from religion. It comes from people's religious upbringing, reinforced, even to this day, by religious instruction and, it has to be said, religious instruction from the two Archbishops of Sydney.*

*My partner Johan is not a believer and he constantly says to me, "I don't understand how one of the most intelligent people in this country can take any of this stuff seriously".*

*MONICA ATTARD: 'Cause you are a believer?*

*MICHAEL KIRBY: I am a Christian Anglican who's been brought up in that tradition, comfortable with it, believing in a loving religion and believing in the message that Jesus brought to love one another and to be reconciled with one another. And that is a very comfortable religion for me and therefore it's still important for me.*

*It's not important for Johan and he keeps saying to me, "they've always been the enemies of women. They've always been the enemies of people of colour. They've called the black people in South Africa in the Dutch-reform Church the children of Noah, who were cast out, and they've always been the enemies of gays and therefore I don't understand why you hurt yourself. Get out of it. It'll make them happier and it'll make you happier".*

*But I will not release that aspect of my upbringing and I therefore hang in there.*

[REDACTED]  
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I have a number of concerns about what you have said. I shall outline these concerns briefly and explain to you why this is important for you personally.

There are four main subjects which are of concern, namely, love, truth, judgment and God. I note that you only refer to the first one although I assume from the reference to being a 'Christian Anglican' that the other three are subsumed under the word 'religion'.

I begin with your reference to 'the message of Jesus'. It is true that Christian Anglicans believe the message that Jesus proclaimed to love one another and to be reconciled with one another. However, at the same time, he also affirmed the first and great commandment:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."<sup>1</sup>

How do we love God? The first and most important step in loving God is recognizing his authority over us. This involves believing that he is right in his judgments and obeying his commandments. How do we know what is right? He has given us his law and one of those laid down in Scripture is that the practice of homosexuality is a direct transgression of his will and law.<sup>2</sup>

As one who professes to be a Christian Anglican I presume that you believe in God. The word of God is quite plain that the same God who sent Jesus will also bring judgment. Love of God is never divorced from obedience to the word of God. It is clear from what you have communicated in your interview that you are breaking God's law as revealed in his word and therefore that you stand under his judgment. This is a perilous situation for you.

I am, therefore, writing to urge and call upon you as a brother who is professing faith in Christ to turn from such wickedness. To act otherwise is to follow the path of the ungodly who believes that he can determine what is right and wrong. In short, I am calling you to recognize that you are wrong to assert that you can be a Christian Anglican and remain in a homosexual relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37

<sup>2</sup> This is the clear teaching of the New Testament such as in 1 Timothy 1:8-11: 'Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.' (ESV)

Justice Michael Kirby, as one appointed to be a messenger, watchman and steward of the Lord in the Anglican Church of Australia, I solemnly warn you that you now stand under judgment and face the wrath of God should you remain unrepentant. God alone determines what is right or wrong. The Lord is the Judge of both truth and love. God has revealed to us his will and we are called to respond in faith and obedience. In situations where we struggle with sin and the law we are to cast ourselves upon the Lord for mercy and salvation.<sup>3</sup> I appeal to you to cast yourself on the mercy of Jesus with respect to this matter. That is, admit your sin, confess your wrongdoing and turn in humble repentance to the Lord Jesus, who alone can forgive you. Take heart and comfort from the assurance of Scripture: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'. I myself have received that forgiveness and my own longing for you is that you will cast yourself upon the one who is abounding in mercy and compassion. The Lord is calling to you to hear his voice. The time is short, for the kingdom of God is at hand, so I implore you to turn from evil and be reconciled with God as your loving, heavenly Father.

It is my hope and prayer that you will respond to this call to faith and repentance. There is no greater joy than the knowledge of living without condemnation before the Lord God Almighty. I do pray that you might know the abounding security of that love.

This love is the love of God in Christ Jesus which has been revealed to us as truth in the gospel. It is the matter of truth which has further spurred me on to write to you. Your claim to be a Christian Anglican and to continue in the practice of homosexual behaviour is ultimately a perversion of truth. In this respect, your partner is more righteous than you are, for he is choosing to remain outside of the circle of faith. In so doing, he is not undermining the truth of the Christian faith from within as your words in the ABC interview effectively seek to do. There is only hypocrisy in calling oneself a Christian and then claiming that the practice of homosexuality, or any other sin, is in accord with the will of God.

This kind of hypocrisy is exposed in the gospel of Mark which describes a conflict over the will of God. The confrontation between Herod Antipas and John the Baptist is over a similar hypocritical stance about the law of God. John the Baptist's rebuke was precisely a matter of God's law:

"For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 9:27-28.

<sup>4</sup> Mark 6:18.

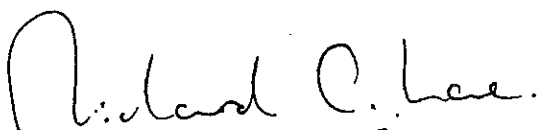
Herod chose to place himself above the law and ultimately chose to fear man rather than God – always the choice of the fool. The result was not only the gruesome death of John the Baptist, but also the condemnation of Herod who failed to administer justice when the very Son of God was brought to trial before him.<sup>5</sup>

Justice Michael Kirby, I am convinced that if you remain unrepentant then you will be walking the same foolish path as that of Herod. Moreover, if you continue to claim to be a Christian Anglican and to make such assertions as you made in the media interview I quoted earlier, then I can only conclude that, like Herod, you are a coward, a liar, a deceiver and that you have set yourself up as the lawless one. That is not a conclusion which I seek but if there is no change then I shall be resigned to the position of acceptance regarding its truth. Furthermore, I am confident that if it is true then it will not only be revealed as truth but the Lord will also exercise his authority over such folly.

Of course, I am not hoping to reach such a conclusion and that is my very purpose in writing to you. In warning you of the danger of God's judgment, I am speaking to you the truth in love, I am aware that the step of repentance would likely involve an enormous change of lifestyle and that help might be needed. In that respect, I draw to your attention a recent article about God's healing of homosexuality and the work of Liberty Christian Ministries Inc which can be found on the Sydney Anglican website.

I do earnestly hope and pray that you will believe my word to you and no longer set yourself up against the living God. If there are matters which I have raised which are unclear to you then I would be happy to seek to bring clarity to this subject.

Yours in the Lord's name,



Reverend Richard Lane

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:6-16.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
21 December 2007

The Reverend Richard Lane  
[REDACTED]  
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Dear Reverend Lane

I hope that the love of Jesus that we share will illuminate my response to your letter of 14 December.

Your letter was on my desk when I returned from the extraction of two teeth. Its tone seemed rather different from the Christmas time messages of love and renewal that I am familiar with.

Although your letter bears evidence of careful preparation, perhaps you would wish, in a Christian spirit, on reflection, to have deleted some of the apparently intemperate language ('condemnation', 'perversion', 'hypocrisy'x3, 'fool'x3, 'coward', 'liar', 'deceiver', 'lawless' etc).

Your interpretation of Scripture as prohibiting homosexual acts is not, you must know, a universal one. Can I commend to you an excellent little book *Facing Our Differences - The Churches and Their Gay and Lesbian Members* by the late Reverend Alan A Brash, a Presbyterian Minister in New Zealand who was Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches? It reviews some of the literature to that time and there has, of course, been a great deal more since.

The passage that you quote from *Timothy* represents an unorthodox and suspect translation. The word "homosexuality" did not appear in the English language until the mid-nineteenth century. The origins of the text in the United States are shown by the American spelling ('practice'). It is a rudimentary error to import the word

'homosexual', with all of its connotations, into an ancient text written in one defunct language and translated into another and then re-translated into English.

In the intervening centuries, there has been a great deal of scientific research about sexual variation. Your letter portrays no knowledge of, or even concern about, this research. I am sorry to say that you seem happier back there with Herod and angry denunciations.

For more than a century, science has been unravelling the truth about sexual variation, not only in human but in other mammals. A good place for you to start would be to read Kinsey's reports. Although sampling techniques have improved since the 1940s and 1950s, the basic truth of Kinsey's investigations has been affirmed and reinforced by more recent research. The cohort of human beings who are exclusively attracted to their own sex is about 5%. This is a relatively small proportion. But, then again, the Jews (also often victims of Christian hatred) were about 5% of the population of Germany in 1933.

Once a stable proportion with this characteristic is appreciated (numbering in all millions of human beings), it is self-evidently absurd to suggest that such people are evil wrong-doers. That would truly be a presumption to attribute such an error of genetics/hormones to God. This realisation obliges us, in the current age, to re-read the scriptural texts (often metaphors for mysterious truths) with the fresh eyes granted to us by contemporary science.

I assume that you do not believe that the earth and universe were literally made in seven days. I also assume that you do not observe each and every rule of the *Leviticus* Holiness Code. To defy modern knowledge and to stick to uninformed interpretations is truly irrational. To do so selectively is specially so. It is a reason why the churches are losing rational adherents.

I do not know whether you have found this truth. But my own experience in life has been that those who are most outspoken against homosexuals are often fighting demons in their own mind that trouble them. Doubtless you read about the tragedy of the Reverend Ted Haggard, until recently President of the National Association of Evangelicals of the United States of America. He was obviously deeply conflicted as an "evangelical" Christian with strong sexual attraction to his own sex. His was but a very visible case and sadly, there are many others. I am sorry to say that they are often brought about by unthinking adherence to misunderstood texts read in isolation, with a blind eye turned to the central loving message of the Jesus of the Gospels.

There is not a single word of Jesus that sustains the thesis of animosity in your letter. It reads like the writings of many lawyers I know who fix on isolated texts, which they misunderstand, and ignore the whole point conveyed by the context and purpose of the document.

It is a pity that you were not brought up in Concord, as a boy. I was. And the Reverend Cecil Dillon at St Andrew's Anglican Church preached the loving message of our religion. He also invited visitors, one of whom was the famous resister to Hitler (who, by the way, put homosexuals in concentration camps). I refer to Pastor Martin Niemoller. This was the brand of Anglicanism in which I was raised. Obviously yours was quite different.

Over this Christmas weekend I will have the privilege of reading passages of scripture in two Sydney church services. On Sunday in the Festival of Carols at St James Anglican Church in Sydney at 7.30 p.m. and on Monday for the Metropolitan Community Church Christmas Eve Service in the Sydney Town Hall at 7.30 p.m. The first is a wonderful service in an Anglican Church that is welcoming to all and exhibits a completely different kind of Anglicanism than you appear to practise. The other is a huge service, packed to the rafters, of people many of whom have been driven from their own denominations by the unchristian like attitudes that I regret to say are displayed in your letter to me. Why not come along to one or both services? They might be an epiphany for you. I would be very glad to greet you in the shared love of Jesus.

I finish this letter as I began with a friendly message for the rebirth that Christmas offers. I hope you will reflect upon what I have said and read more widely before you venture again on such a rebuke to a fellow Christian.

May the love of Jesus lighten our darkness and increase our humility and openness to the truth.

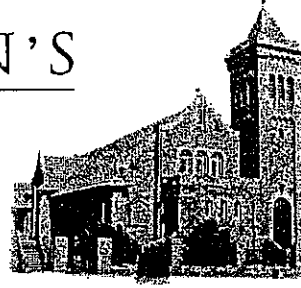
Yours sincerely



MICHAEL KIRBY

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"We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord,  
and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."  
II Corinthians 4:5

The Honourable Mr Michael Kirby  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
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Thursday, December 27, 2007

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter to me. It really was so delightfully encompassed by the 'love of Jesus' that I'm sure in a very short time we shall be on a nickname basis – 'Laney and Kirbs' or something like that.

Your letter certainly raises lots of matters and I feel I should make the following comments in response.

The first point I would make is that I was not the one who raised the issue of 'religious instruction' within the public domain. I am responding to your public declaration. As I am called to be a 'watchman' in my vocation as an Anglican priest, I felt it incumbent on me to fulfil that role when I heard your statements.<sup>1</sup> If my warning was strident in tone, then it is because of that calling, and a genuine concern for you as one of the members of our church. That is a concern which remains. At heart, your comments raised the issue of our identity as 'Christian Anglicans'. I made quite clear that it was the issue of hypocrisy which I have found particularly concerning and if you seek 'a single word of Jesus' on that subject then I would begin with Matthew 23. There is no little irony in your own paragraph regarding the 'thesis of animosity'.

After reading your letter, it seems hard for me not to conclude that my childhood and upbringing have been severely limited and I have been much deprived. As I write, that strikes me as quite extraordinary. How did you perceive this or was it simply an innate gift? In your loving and friendly response to me you have helped me to see so many of my deficiencies. I thought that I was bringing a word of truth to you...but, it would seem that it is you who have saved me. After your enlightenment, how can I not but be filled with gratitude for my eyes being opened to the real or the potential me. Is it true that I am so consumed by hatred that I'm on a par with the spirit of Hitler?! Woe to me that my Anglican church minister failed to invite such pastors as Pastor Martin

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<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 3:16-21

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Niemoller. Look at me, pray for me. Michael, you have alerted me to so many of my shortcomings. How perilous it is for me: Kinsey-ignorant, hermeneutically-naïve. If neither of those take me down, then I will surely be ripped apart by my own internal demons like the Reverend Ted. But, even if all those are avoided, then I'm already in the pit for my writing is just like one of those many pitiful lawyers – those who sadly did not have the advantage, or rather, the esteemed privilege of an upbringing in Concord and the good fortune of hearing the Reverend Cecil Dillon. Nor did I realize that you had such a grasp of the matters involved in biblical translation. Silly me! (I am just so glad that my Primary school teacher instructed me on when to use practice with a 'c' – I still recall those words: 'the noun has the 'ice' ending.' – imagine if I had committed that error on top of the failure to recognise the rudimentary error of translation!)

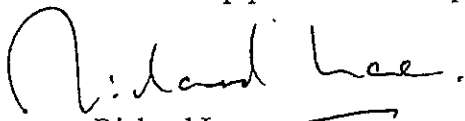
It was so good to receive such a loving and friendly message. I am left feeling so small, feeble and so much to be pitied after your 'love of Jesus' friendly letter, that I really cannot imagine how awful it would be to have received an angry letter from you, Michael. I'm sorry that I could not make the services which you mentioned, however, you might like to inform me of further reading performances of yours and perhaps one day I may be part of the audience. The season of epiphany is nigh.

Finally, I do want to say that, so small and ignorant as I am, I still do believe that you are wrong. That is, I still believe that there is a matter of repentance called for. In the words of Jesus: 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'

~~There were lots of matters raised in your response, but the matter of repentance~~ did appear to be overlooked. For my own mind, this whole discussion would be dropped by me, if there were simply a public retraction of the statement about Christian Anglicans and religious instruction. But, if that does not occur, then it seems best for me to follow your advice and with 'an openness to the truth' to seek wisdom beyond my own limited knowledge. I think that the best way forward will be to share our correspondence with my fellow clergy and in humility asking them: 'Am I wrong?'

Until that point, in light of your extensive reading, research and knowledge to which you have alluded and my own pitiful, if not detestably self-righteous and angry state of mind, it seems best for me not to reach any of the conclusions I have stated in my first letter. Certainly not before receiving another perspective. After all, if one is a coward, liar or a deceiver then one has a tendency to manipulate words and sentiments, and surely, my dear Kirbs, that would not have been the case in the straightforward response which you have so lovingly communicated with me.

Yours in epiphanic friendship,

  
Richard Lane

PS I hope that the teeth are feeling better.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2 January 2008

Dear Revd. Richard Lane,

Thank you for your further letter. I agree to sharing the correspondence for I believe this will advance the truth. There is nothing in *Matthew 23* that alters my earlier statement that the words of Jesus in the Gospels contain no support for animosity towards homosexuals – quite the contrary. Nor is there any occasion for "repentance" on my part, as you continue to demand. Please re-read my earlier letter.

I ask you to excuse me that I cannot share the mood of frivolity evident in your second letter. I have known too many homosexual people who have been subjected to violence, rejection by their families and suffered self-loathing because of the kind of religious opinion expressed in your letters.

May the grace of Jesus be with us both in this new year.

*Michael Kirby*  
*Michael Kirby*

MICHAEL KIRBY