

Open Letter to the Presbyterian Church (USA) from Archbishop Desmond Tutu

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To Rev. Grayde Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dear Brother in Christ,

I am writing you with the request that you share these thoughts with my brothers and sisters in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

It is incumbent upon all of God's children to speak out against injustice. It is sometimes equally important to speak in solidarity when justice has been done. For that reason I am writing to affirm my belief that in making room in your constitution for gay and lesbian Christians to be ordained as church leaders, you have accomplished an act of justice.

I realize that among your ecumenical partners, some voices are claiming that you have done the wrong thing, and I know that you rightly value your relationship with Christians in other parts of the world. Sadly, it is not always popular to do justice, but it is always right. People will say that the ones you are now willing to ordain are sinners. I have come to believe, through the reality shared with me by my scientist and medical friends, and confirmed to me by many who are gay, that being gay is not a choice. Like skin color or left-handedness, sexual orientation is just another feature of our diversity as a human family. How wonderful that God has made us with so much diversity, yet all in God's image! Salvation means being called out of our narrow bonds into a broad place of welcome to all.

You are undoubtedly aware that in some countries the church has been complicit in the legal persecution of lesbians and gays. Individuals are being arrested and jailed simply because they are different in one respect from the majority. By making it possible for those in same-gender relationships to be ordained as pastors, preachers, elders, and deacons, you are being a witness to your ecumenical partners that you believe in the wideness of God's merciful love.

For freedom Christ has set us free. In Christ we are not bound by old, narrow prejudice, but free to embrace the full humanity of our brothers and sisters in all our glorious differences. May God bless you as you live into this reality, and may you know that there are many Christians in the world who continue to stand by your side.

God bless you.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (Cape Town, South Africa)