

18th June 2008

The Reverend Dr Martin Dudley,
St Bartholomew the Great Parish Office,
6 Kinghorn Street,
London,
EC1A 7HW.

Dear Martin,

You have sought to justify your actions to the BBC and in various newspapers but have failed more than two weeks after the service to communicate with me.

I read in the press that you had been planning this event since November. I find it astonishing that you did not take the opportunity to consult your Bishop.

You describe the result as “familiar words reordered and reconfigured carrying new meanings.” I note that the order of service, which I have now received, includes the phrase “With this ring I thee bind, with my body I thee worship”.

At first sight this seems to break the House of Bishops Guidelines which as I explained in my letter of December 6th 2005 apply the traditional teaching of the Church of England to the new circumstances created by the enactment of Civil Partnerships.

The point at issue is not Civil Partnerships themselves or the relation of biblical teaching to homosexual practice. There is of course a range of opinion on these matters in the Church and, as you know, homophobia is not tolerated in the Diocese of London. The real issue is whether you wilfully defied the discipline of the Church and broke your oath of canonical obedience to your Bishop.

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The Archbishops have already issued a statement in which they say that “those clergy who disagree with the Church’s teaching are at liberty to seek to persuade others within the Church of the reasons why they believe, in the light of Scripture, tradition and reason that it should be changed. But they are not at liberty simply to disregard it.”

St Bartholomew’s is not a personal fiefdom. You serve there as an ordained minister of the Church of England, under the authority of the Canons and as someone who enjoys my licence. I have already asked the Archdeacon of London to commence the investigation and I shall be referring the matter to the Chancellor of the Diocese. Before I do this, I am giving you an opportunity to make representations to me direct.

Yours faithfully.

The Rt Revd & Rt Hon Richard Chartres DD FSA