

Dear Colleagues,

I am contacting you all on Bishop Richard's behalf since, as you know, he is currently away on holiday.

Earlier this year, the Bishop wrote to you regarding a service held at St Bartholomew the Great on May 31st, which had generated considerable publicity and consternation.

Since this time, under the Bishop's instructions, the Archdeacon of London has carried out an investigation into the matter, alongside the Chancellor of the Diocese. This has involved a series of frank discussions with the Rector, Revd Dr Martin Dudley.

As a consequence, the Rector has made expressly clear his regret over what happened at St Bartholomew the Great and accepted the service should not have taken place. Bishop Richard has considered the matter and has decided to accept the Rector's apology in full. The matter is therefore now closed.

To avoid any uncertainty over what has been said, I have enclosed below, with the Rector's permission, his statement of apology to the Bishop:

"I can now appreciate that the service held at St Bartholomew the Great on 31 May 2008 was inconsistent with the terms of the Pastoral Statement from the House of Bishops issued in 2005. Whilst the precise status of this pastoral document within the Church of England generally and the Diocese of London in particular may be a matter of differing interpretations, I ought to have afforded it far greater weight. I regret the embarrassment caused to you by this event and by its subsequent portrayal in the media. I now recognise that I should not have responded positively to the request for this service, even though it was made by another incumbent of your Diocese, who is a colleague, neighbour and friend of us both nor should I have adopted uncritically the Order of Service prepared by him and his partner. I had not appreciated that the event would have been attended by so many nor that it would have attracted the publicity and notoriety which it did.

"I share your abhorrence of homophobia in all its forms. I am profoundly uneasy with much of the content of the House of Bishops' Pastoral Statement which anecdotal evidence suggests is being widely, though discretely, disregarded in this Diocese and elsewhere. Nonetheless, I am willing to abide by its content in the future, until such time as it is rescinded or amended, and I undertake not to provide any form of blessing for same sex couples registering civil partnerships."

As I say, following the Rector's full and frank apology, the Bishop considers the matter now closed.

With best wishes and prayers

Pete Broadbent
Assistant Bishop of London