



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MONTANA

THE RT. REV. C. FRANKLIN BROOKHART, JR., D. MIN. BISHOP

February 11, 2010

The Rev. Ruth A. Meyers, Ph.D.
Church Divinity School of the Pacific
2451 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709

Dear Ruth:

Thank you for your correspondence and note. It is always a pleasure to hear from you.

In your letters I was pleased to see that you and the commission are committed to an open process in regard to your work on Resolution C056. My vote for the resolution was a reluctant one, partly out of fear that this would be a closed-door process.

In direct response to your letter I have not authorized a "generous pastoral response" in the Diocese of Montana, and I am not aware of anyone seeking same. I am a so-called Windsor compliant bishop and a signatory of the Anaheim Statement. But I did vote for the resolution thinking that it may be time to see the results of some theological and liturgical work, understanding that any authorization of a rite is further---I would say, much further---down the road, if it is possible at all.

I have come at this issue of same-sex blessings with the awareness that God may be doing a new thing; so I try to be open and flexible about all points of view. But I must say that I am not yet convinced that this represents a "new thing" from God. I have made it my business to read most of the books on this subject, both pro and con, and have had face-to-face, serious conversations with advocates of both sides of this issue. For me, the heart of the problem is scripture, namely Romans 1, which itself is a reflection on Genesis 1. I do not see a way around this, and I do not detect a trajectory in scripture, as is the case with divorce, that would allow some wiggle-room. I know that this puts me in a pastorally difficult place, but those who advocate same-sex blessings are in a biblically difficult place; no matter where you stand you are in trouble. So the bottom line for me is this: we as a church need, above all else, to go head-on with these exegetical and hermeneutical issues. This is a very serious concern for me as a person committed to the authority of scripture.

Other factors also continue to nag at me. For instance, I do not see an analogy between this issue and racism or the ordination of women; for me this is about behavior and functioning as a moral agent, not race, gender, or orientation.

Further, the traditional Christian stance on sexual behavior is difficult for everyone, gay and straight. I fear that in our desire to affirm people where they are, we ameliorate the challenge of living as people who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ.

Also, I continue to be troubled with the idea that our time and place are so unique that we should make an exception to our teaching. This is one of those tangled issues that I think the commission needs to unravel.

Finally, my reading of the science and my conversations with scientists and medical people indicate that the genesis of homosexuality is by no means clear. Many of the studies are now forty years old and based on small samples. Perhaps my work in this area is not current, but this is another area that needs clarification.

Moving in another direction, I also hope the commission can deal with defining "blessing." This is, it seems to me, one of those basic issues we have not addressed in a compelling way.

Despite all of the above, I might be able to consider a rite that makes it clear that we are not dealing with marriage, but with a way to sustain gay and lesbian persons in monogamous relationships. I can envision a rite for the exchange of vows of commitment and prayers for the couple.

I am aware that you personally disagree with me on a number of points. But I understand my role in the life of the church to be conservative about such matters; your place and role are quite different.

I thank you for the opportunity to make these comments. And I wish you well in your new ministry at CDSP.

Yours in the Risen One,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Frank".

C. Franklin Brookhart, Jr.