

# GENE ROBINSON

b. May 29, 1947

*“It’s not so much a dream as  
a calling from God.”*

**Gene Robinson is  
the first openly gay  
Episcopal bishop.  
His ordination led to  
international discussion  
about the inclusion of  
gay clergy in church  
hierarchy.**

In 2003, the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson was elected bishop of the diocese of New Hampshire, making him the first openly gay Episcopal bishop. His ordination caused a global rift within the Episcopal Church and led to international debate about the inclusion of gay clergy in church hierarchy. In the weeks leading up to his consecration, Robinson received hate mail and death threats, triggering the FBI to place him under 24-hour protection.

Gene Robinson grew up outside Lexington, Kentucky. The son of poor tobacco sharecroppers, he was raised without running water or indoor plumbing. He recalls his childhood as rustic and religious, with Sunday school and services at a small Disciples of Christ congregation.

Robinson earned his bachelor’s degree in American studies from the University of the South and his Master of Divinity from the Episcopal General Theological Seminary in New York. He was ordained a priest in 1973.

Despite doubts about his sexual orientation, Robinson married in 1972. He and his wife moved to New Hampshire where they raised two daughters. Robinson worked as youth ministries coordinator for the seven dioceses of New England and cofounded the national Episcopal Youth Event. Robinson divorced his wife and came out in the mid-1980’s.

Robinson is the coauthor of three AIDS education curricula. In Uganda, he helped set up a national peer counseling program for AIDS educators working with religious institutions.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force honored Robinson with a Leadership Award in 2004. In 2007, he received the Flag Bearer Award from Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) for leadership and inclusion in faith communities.

In 2008, Bishop Robinson and Mark Andrews, partners of more than 19 years, exchanged vows in a civil union ceremony in New Hampshire.



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