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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bishop Gene Robinson to Speak at the 50th Anniversary Ceremony at Independence Hall

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - December 15, 2014 - Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Episcopal Bishop, will join the 50th Anniversary Ceremony on July 4th, commemorating the Gay Pioneers and celebrating 50 years of LGBT civil rights progress. The ceremony will focus on advances in five key areas including religion.

“We are honored that Bishop Gene Robinson will present the remarkable progress our movement has made in organized religion and faith communities,” said Malcolm Lazin, Chair, 50th Anniversary Celebration. Bishop Robinson’s ordination created national and international controversy and debate and within the Episcopal Church and throughout organized religion.

“What a joy it is to join in the celebration of 50 years of LGBT progress at Independence Hall on July 4, 2015.” Bishop Robinson said. “All of us who are LGBT owe a great debt to those who worked to make our lives better, long before it was easy or popular. It is a time to honor those on whose shoulders we stand.”

The organized LGBT civil rights movement was launched when activists from New York, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia staged demonstrations for equality each Fourth of July from 1965 to 1969. When 40 activists picketed in front of Independence Hall in 1965, it was the largest demonstration for gay equality in world history.

Organized by Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings, these “Annual Reminders” laid the groundwork for the Stonewall riot. After Stonewall, Kameny and Gittings suspended the Annual Reminders and turned their energies to the 1970 march from Greenwich Village to Central Park marking the first anniversary of Stonewall.

From July 2 to 5, 2015, in Philadelphia, the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the LGBT civil rights movement will feature panel discussions, a screening of the documentary film “Gay Pioneers” with special guests, fireworks, LGBT history exhibits, parties, concerts, the 50th Anniversary Ceremony and wreath laying at the Gay Pioneers historical marker and a street festival in the gayborhood. Most events will take place on or near Independence Mall in Independence National Historical Park.

For more information, visit www.lgbt50th.org and www.gaypioneers.com.

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