

The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut

August 3, 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Ordained Ministry:

We are writing as a follow-up to our May 2012 "Episcopal Epistle" and Clergy Conference "indaba" with respect to the pastoral needs of gay and lesbian couples seeking to be married in The Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

As expected, the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church engaged deeply with questions related to the blessing for same-sex couples. Holy listening and a generosity of spirit characterized the discussions and decisions of the Convention related to such blessings. In Resolutions A049 and A050 the General Convention provided for a rite of blessing for same-sex couples and called the church to study canonical and liturgical limitations related to marriage equality. Resolution A049 states in part:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention authorize for provisional use "The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant" from "Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing" beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2012, under the direction and subject to the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority; and be it further

Resolved, That bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-sex marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That bishops may authorize adaptation of these materials to meet the needs of members of this Church . . .

As your bishops we commend the entire report of The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music known as "Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You will be a Blessing," which can be found on our diocesan website. In the resource you will find both the rite as adopted by the General Convention as well as valuable theological, and legal and canonical discussions related to the blessing of same-sex relationships. We particularly commend the pastoral resources for preparing same-sex couples for a liturgy of blessing.

In keeping with Resolution A049 we authorize priests seeking to provide blessing rites for same-sex couples to use, and adapt as appropriate: "The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant" from "Liturgical Resources I" beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2012. We encourage priests to work closely with their lay leadership if their parishes anticipate offering blessing rites for same-sex couples.

In addition, and in keeping with the report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (page 220), beginning the First Sunday in Advent 2012 priests in the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut may also officiate at the civil marriage of a same-sex couple as a "generous pastoral response" to lesbian and gay couples seeking to be married. Priests officiating at such a civil marriage must take care to conform to the specific laws of the State of Connecticut.

We give thanks that The Episcopal Church through the decisions of our General

Convention has recognized the love and holiness manifested in life-long committed relationships of lesbian and gay sisters and brothers in Christ and has begun to offer rites of blessing for such relationships. We are pleased that the church's discipline has also begun to change so that priests may offer a generous pastoral response consistent with Connecticut's embrace of marriage equality.

Finally, we are very appreciative of the pastoral care and concern that you provide to the people of the Diocese of Connecticut. And we thank God for the privilege of working alongside each and every one of you in service to God's mission of restoration and reconciliation in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faithfully,
Ian, Jim and Laura

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas
The Rt. Rev. James E. Curry
The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens

Resources:

["Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing"](#)

[Resolution A049 - Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships:](#)

[Resolution A050 - Create Task Force on the Study of Marriage:](#)

