

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2009  
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

**RESOLUTION NO.:** 2009-C031  
**TITLE:** Rites of Holy Union for Same Gender Couple  
**PROPOSER:** Diocese of Vermont  
**COMMITTEE:** Prayer Book, Liturgy & Church Music

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**Directly Related:** (attached)

2003-C051 Consider Blessing Committed, Same-Gender Relationships  
2000-D039 Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage and Existence of Disagreement on the Church's Teaching  
1997-C002 On the Topic of Rites for the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships (Rejected)  
1994-C042 Prepare Report Considering Rites for Same-Sex Commitments

**Indirectly Related:**

1997-C003 Affirm Traditional Marriage and Request Study of Same-Sex Relationships

*In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions of General Convention for the period 1976 through 2006, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. Committee members who are interested in obtaining copies of "indirectly related" resolutions, legislative history before 1976, or who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.*



**Resolution Number:** 2003-C051  
**Title:** Consider Blessing Committed, Same-Gender Relationships  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Substituted and Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 74th General Convention affirm the following:*

1. That our life together as a community of faith is grounded in the saving work of Jesus Christ and expressed in the principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral: Holy Scripture, the historic Creeds of the Church, the two dominical Sacraments, and the Historic Episcopate.
2. That we reaffirm Resolution A069 of the 65th General Convention (1976) that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church."
3. That, in our understanding of homosexual persons, differences exist among us about how best to care pastorally for those who intend to live in monogamous, non-celibate unions; and what is, or should be, required, permitted, or prohibited by the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church concerning the blessing of the same.
4. That we reaffirm Resolution D039 of the 73rd General Convention (2000), that "We expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God," and that such relationships exist throughout the church.
5. That we recognize that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions.
6. That we commit ourselves, and call our church, in the spirit of Resolution A104 of the 70th General Convention (1991), to continued prayer, study, and discernment on the pastoral care for gay and lesbian persons, to include the compilation and development by a special commission organized and appointed by the Presiding Bishop, of resources to facilitate as wide a conversation of discernment as possible throughout the church.
7. That our baptism into Jesus Christ is inseparable from our communion with one another, and we commit ourselves to that communion despite our diversity of opinion and, among dioceses, a diversity of pastoral practice with the gay men and lesbians among us.
8. That it is a matter of faith that our Lord longs for our unity as his disciples, and for us this entails living within the boundaries of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church. We believe this discipline expresses faithfulness to our polity and that it will facilitate the conversation we seek, not only in The Episcopal Church, but also in the wider Anglican Communion and beyond.

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 615f.



**Resolution Number:** 2000-D039  
**Title:** Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage and Existence of Disagreement on the Church's Teaching  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Substituted and Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the members of the 73rd General Convention intend for this Church to provide a safe and just structure in which all can utilize their gifts and creative energies for mission; and be it further*

*Resolved, That we acknowledge that while the issues of human sexuality are not yet resolved, there are currently couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in marriage and couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in other life-long committed relationships; and be it further*

*Resolved, That we expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God; and be it further*

*Resolved, That we denounce promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members; and be it further*

*Resolved, That this Church intends to hold all its members accountable to these values, and will provide for them the prayerful support, encouragement, and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by them; and be it further*

*Resolved, That we acknowledge that some, acting in good conscience, who disagree with the traditional teaching of the Church on human sexuality, will act in contradiction to that position; and be it further*

*Resolved, That in continuity with previous actions of the General Convention of this Church, and in response to the call for dialogue by the Lambeth Conference, we affirm that those on various sides of controversial issues have a place in the Church, and we reaffirm the imperative to promote conversation between persons of differing experiences and perspectives, while acknowledging the Church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 287f.



**Resolution Number:** 1997-C002  
**Title:** On the Topic of Rites for the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Rejected  
**Text of the Resolution:**

*Resolved*, the House of Bishops concurring, That this 72nd General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission to develop, after critical study of pertinent rites already in use by faith communities, a rite or rites for the blessing of committed relationships between persons of the same sex, and to present such forms to the 73rd General Convention for inclusion in *The Book of Occasional Services*.



**Resolution Number:** 1994-C042  
**Title:** Prepare Report Considering Rites for Same-Sex Commitments  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Substituted and Amended  
**Final Text:**

***Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 71st General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission and the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops to prepare and present to the 72nd General Convention, as part of the Church's ongoing dialogue on human sexuality, a report addressing the theological foundations and pastoral considerations involved in the development of rites honoring love and commitment between persons of the same sex; and be it further***

***Resolved, That no rites for the honoring of love and commitment between persons of the same sex be developed unless and until the preparation of such rites has been authorized by the General Convention; and be it further***

***Resolved, That the sum of \$8,600 be appropriated to support this work, subject to funding considerations.***

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), p. 819.

TOPIC/TITLE: Liturgy: Rites of Holy Union for Same Gender Couples

PROPOSER: Diocese of Vermont

C&C PAGE:

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- 1 *Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That 76th General Convention direct the
- 2 Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to prepare rites of holy union for same-
- 3 gender couples for consideration by the 77th General Convention; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That such rites should reflect the legal contexts in which such holy unions
- 5 might take place; and be it further
- 6 *Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music devise an open and
- 7 transparent process for the conduct of its work, inviting participation from dioceses and
- 8 individuals who have already engaged in such liturgical and theological work and
- 9 inviting theological reflection from all interested parties in The Episcopal Church and the
- 10 provinces of the Anglican Communion.
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EXPLANATION:

Anglican theology has traditionally had its deepest roots not in abstract theory but in practice, the practice of prayer and sacramental worship. In other words, Anglican theology is incarnational; its truths are both found in and expressed by forms of prayer and worship adopted for use in particular contexts by particular church communities. To some extent, Anglican prayer is common prayer, but since new churches began to form outside the Church of England, many of those churches have adapted the mother church's forms to meet the developing traditions of theology and worship practice in their own cultural contexts. Today, the Anglican Communion is experiencing conflict over the role of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons in its various churches and particularly over whether some churches of the Communion should celebrate in a formal way the relationships of gay and lesbian couples. Many who are critical of The Episcopal Church claim that the theology has not been done that could support such rites of blessing. Many who support such rites claim that the theology has been and continues to be done by those engaged in the creation and use of rites of blessing. This resolution acknowledges the incarnational and liturgical foundations of Anglican theological reflection by proposing that The Episcopal Church continue the work and conversation begun at the 65th General Convention meeting in Minneapolis in 1976, placing that work in the context of the preparation of resources for worship. It is based on the assumption that this practical approach is the best way for The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion to move beyond stalemate on the question of a theology that may support the blessing of same gender couples. The resolution does not represent a rejection of the concerns expressed by The Episcopal Church's partners in the Anglican Communion. Rather, it is a response to calls for continued conversation, and it proposes that such conversation be placed in the context of an open and transparent process that invites participation by all interested parties, including those from other provinces in the Anglican Communion. Given the diversity of cultural contexts in the Anglican Communion, there is little likelihood of Communion-wide consensus in the foreseeable future. However, in the context of many parts of The Episcopal Church, there is a pastoral