

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

RESOLUTION NO.: 2009-D043
TITLE: Designation of Inquiring and Discerning Parishes for the Blessing of Same Sex Unions
PROPOSER: The Rev. Andrew Green
COMMITTEE: Prayer Book, Liturgy and Church Music

Directly Related: (attached)

2006-A095 Reaffirm Support of Gay and Lesbian Persons
2006-A163 Affirm Pastoral Care for All Members of the Church
2006-A167 Reaffirm Church Membership of Gay and Lesbian Persons
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-B101 Pastoral Study Document on Sexuality
1994-C042 Prepare Report Considering Rites for Same-Sex Commitments
1991-A104 Affirm the Church's Teaching on Sexual Expression, Commission Congregational Dialogue, and Direct Bishops
1976-A069 Recognize the Equal Claims of Homosexuals

Indirectly Related:

1997-C003 Affirm Traditional Marriage and Request Study of Same-Sex Relationships
1997-D011 Apologize for the Church's Rejection of Gays and Lesbians
1994-D102 Amend Canon I.18.1 [Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony] (Referred)
1988-D020 Amend Canon I.18.3 [Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony]
1988-D087 On the Topic of the Canon on Solemnization of Holy Matrimony (Referred)

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.

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Resolution Number: 2006-A095
Title: Reaffirm Support of Gay and Lesbian Persons
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm The Episcopal Church's historical support of gay and lesbian persons as children of God and entitled to full civil rights; and be it further
Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the 71st General Convention's action calling upon "municipal council, state legislatures and the United States Congress to approve measures giving gay and lesbian couples protection[s] such as: bereavement and family leave policies; health benefits; pension benefits; real-estate transfer tax benefits; and commitments to mutual support enjoyed by non-gay married couples"; and be it further
Resolved, That the 75th General Convention oppose any state or federal constitutional amendment that prohibits same-sex civil marriage or civil unions.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 704.



Resolution Number: 2006-A163
Title: Affirm Pastoral Care for All Members of the Church
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church affirm the centrality of effective and appropriate pastoral care for all members of this Church and all who come seeking the aid of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commit The Episcopal Church to the ongoing engagement of and sensitive response to the request and need of all the people of God – in particular, but not exclusively, those who agree and those who disagree with the actions of this body, those who feel isolated thereby, and gay and lesbian persons within and without this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention recognize the agonizing position of those who do not feel able to receive appropriate pastoral care from their own bishops, and urges the members of the House of Bishops to seek the highest degree of communion and reconciliation within their own dioceses, using when requested in good faith the Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO) process detailed in the March 2004 statement of the House of Bishops, “Caring for All the Churches;” and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention urge continued maintenance of historic diocesan boundaries, the authority of the diocesan bishop, and respect for the historical relationships of the separate and autonomous Provinces of the Anglican Communion.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 356.



Resolution Number: 2006-A167
Title: Reaffirm Church Membership of Gay and Lesbian Persons
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirm that gay and lesbian persons are by Baptism full members of the Body of Christ and of The Episcopal Church as “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” (GC1976–A069); and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reiterate its apology “on behalf of The Episcopal Church to its members who are gay or lesbian, and to lesbians and gay men outside the Church, for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church,” and recommit to “seek amendment of our life together as we ask God’s help in sharing the Good News with all people” (GC1997–D011); and be it further

Resolved, That, in evidence of that apology, The Episcopal Church pledge to include openly gay and lesbian persons on every committee, commission or task force developed for the specific purpose of discussing issues about sexuality and request the same of our sister churches in the Anglican Communion and Anglican Communion bodies; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reiterate 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” (GC2003–C051).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 669-670.



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-B101
Title: Pastoral Study Document on Sexuality
Legislative Action Taken: Adopted
Final Text:

*Resolved, That the House of Bishops, affirming the teaching of the Church that the normative context for sexual intimacy is lifelong, heterosexual, monogamous marriage, and pursuing our Anglican tradition of historic truth encountering contemporary life, offers *Continuing the Dialogue: A Pastoral Study Document of the House of Bishops to the Church as the Church Considers Issues of Human Sexuality* to the Church as a way for the Church to continue the dialogue on human sexuality; and be it further*

Resolved, That the two statements, "An Affirmation" and "An Affirmation in Koinonia," not be an official part of the House of Bishops' Pastoral Study Document on human sexuality; the statements are to be made a part of the minutes with names of signatories attached, but not distributed with the study document.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), pp. 141-42.



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.



Resolution Number: 1991-A104
Title: Affirm the Church's Teaching on Sexual Expression, Commission Congregational Dialogue, and Direct Bishops to Prepare a Pastoral Teaching
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, **That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirms that the teaching of the Episcopal Church is that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong monogamous "union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind" "intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord" as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer; and be it further**

Resolved, **That this Church continues to work to reconcile the discontinuity between this teaching and the experience of many members of this body; and be it further**

Resolved, **That this General Convention confesses our failure to lead and to resolve this discontinuity through legislative efforts based upon resolutions directed at singular and various aspects of these issues; and be it further**

Resolved, **That this General Convention commissions the Bishops and members of each Diocesan Deputation to initiate a means for all congregations in their jurisdiction to enter into dialogue and deepen their understanding of these complex issues; and further this General Convention directs the President of each Province to appoint one Bishop, one lay deputy and one clerical deputy in that province to facilitate the process, to receive reports from the dioceses at each meeting of their provincial synod and report to the 71st General Convention; and be it further**

Resolved, **That this General Convention directs the House of Bishops to prepare a Pastoral Teaching prior to the 71st General Convention using the learnings from the diocesan and provincial processes and calling upon such insight as is necessary from theologians, theological ethicists, social scientists and gay and lesbian persons; and that three lay persons and three members of the clergy from the House of Deputies, appointed by the President of the House of Deputies be included in the preparation of this Pastoral Teaching.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 746.



Resolution Number: 1976-A069
Title: Recognize the Equal Claims of Homosexuals
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Submitted
Final Text:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, **That it is the sense of this General Convention 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.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis 1976* (New York: General Convention, 1977), p. C-109.

TOPIC/TITLE: Same-Sex Unions: Designation of Inquiring and Discerning Parishes for the Blessing of Same Sex Unions

PROPOSER: The Rev. Andrew Green

C&C PAGE:

BB PAGE:

1 Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 76th General Convention of the
2 Episcopal Church recognize bishops to be stewards of the continuing conversation about
3 human sexuality; and be it further

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5 Resolved, That under the direction of their bishop or ecclesiastical authority, and consent
6 of the priest in charge and vestry, parishes may be designated as Inquiring and
7 Discernment Parishes where the blessing of unions of two consenting adults will be
8 permitted with the same level of care, commitment, and integrity expected in Holy
9 Matrimony, but not currently permitted under the rubrics of Holy Matrimony; and be it
10 further

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12 Resolved, That such designation shall take place after the parish has undergone a
13 comprehensive study on human sexuality that provides for a broad discussion on different
14 theological and pastoral perspectives and holiness in relationships; and be it further

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16 Resolved, That Inquiring and Discerning Congregations shall make annual reports to their
17 bishop or ecclesiastical authority. Information in such reports shall include but not be
18 limited to the resource(s) used for the comprehensive study, the number of blessings
19 performed, and the rites used for such blessings; and be it further

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21 Resolved, That the above-mentioned reports shall be forwarded to a special committee of
22 the 77th General Convention, with members of the committee to be appointed by the
23 presidents of both houses to evaluate what is learned in this activity of discernment.

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EXPLANATION:

The issue of same-sex blessings has significantly polarized society and has similarly become a divisive issue in the church. There are those who say that it is morally wrong and against God's law to bless same gender relationships. Others say that it is a matter of justice that they be fully recognized and blessed. Both perspectives led on Scripture, theological reflection, Church history and tradition, and science. Each is willing to presume the absolute rightness of their position regardless of the consequences to the one with

Endorser(s): The Rev. Paul Carmona PhD, Mr. Will M.L. Hay

whom they disagree. As Anglicans we who often find ourselves between hardened positions seek a middle way. As Christians, Jesus calls us not to be right but to be peacemakers. This may be a justice issue without compromise; it may be a moral issue requiring condemnation of the particular behavior. Inquiry and discernment provides the space to do this work. This process is an invitation to those who have firmly fixed positions on either side to enter into a place of uncertainty where God can speak to the Church. If this feels like compromise for some on a question where there can be no compromise, then please pray that it is a Godly compromise under which we freely enter the wilderness of unknowing, led by God to a place none of us yet knows, but full of promise for all.

*Endorser(s):*The Rev. Paul Carmona PhD, Mr. Will M.L. Hay