

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2018
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-A086
TITLE: Authorize Rites to Bless Relationships
PROPOSER: Task Force on the Study of Marriage
TOPIC: Liturgy

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A037 Appoint an Expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage
2015-A054 Authorize Trial Use of Marriage and Blessing Rites in "Liturgical Resources I"
2012-A049 Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Sex Relationships

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2012-A050 Create a Task Force on the Study of Marriage
2003-C051 Consider Blessing Committed, Same-Gender Relationships
2000-D039 Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage and Existence of Disagreement

Supplemental Documents: (Linked)

(Blue Book) Report to General Convention, [Task Force on the Study of Marriage](#), see page 810.

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1976 through 2015, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The "direct" resolutions are attached and "indirect" resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.

A086 Authorize Rites to Bless Relationships

Proposer	Task Force on the Study of Marriage
Topic	Liturgy
Endorsed by	
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
HiA / Leg. Cttee	/
Current Status	Resolution Filed
Version	Original (as filed)
Review Status	Not yet reviewed

RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 79th General Convention authorize “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” (as appended to the report of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage), authorized for use by the 78th General Convention, to be added to the “Enriching Our Worship” series, for use in jurisdictions of the Episcopal Church in which 1) the couple desiring marriage are of the same sex; and 2) the civil jurisdiction in which the marriage would occur does not allow marriage of same-sex persons; and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention authorize “The Blessing of a Lifelong Relationship” (as appended to the report of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage) for inclusion in the “Enriching Our Worship” series; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That “The Blessing of a Lifelong Relationship” shall not be used for mere convenience. It may be used 1) by couples who desire to form and to formalize a relationship with one another that is monogamous, unconditional and lifelong, but is nevertheless something different than a marriage in that it does not include the merging of property, finances or other legal encumbrances; and 2) by couples for whom the requirement to furnish identification to obtain a marriage license could result in legal penalties including deportation, because of their immigration status; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That these rites are to be used under the direction of a bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority; and be it further
- 5 *Resolved*, That it shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to officiate at any rite of blessing defined herein; and be it further
- 6 *Resolved*, That this Church continue to honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality, and that no bishop, priest, deacon or lay person should be coerced or penalized in any manner, nor suffer any canonical disabilities, as a result of his or her conscientious objection to or support for these rites; and be it further
- 7 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention direct the Secretary of General Convention and the Custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer, in consultation with the outgoing Chair of

the Task Force on the Study of Marriage and the Chairs of the Legislative Committees to whom this legislation is referred, to finalize and arrange with Church Publishing for the publication (in English, Spanish, and French) of the material contained in “Enriching Our Worship” as approved by the 79th General Convention; the General Convention Office to make these materials available electronically at no cost no later than the first Sunday of Advent 2018.

EXPLANATION

In response to Resolution 2009-C056, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music developed “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” as a rite for blessing same-sex relationships. The rite was authorized for use by the 2012 General Convention (Resolution 2012-A049), then revised and authorized for use by the 2015 General Convention (Resolution 2015-A054). This rite is intended for use only in jurisdictions of The Episcopal Church in which 1) the couple desiring marriage are of the same sex; and 2) the civil jurisdiction in which the marriage would occur does not allow marriage of same-sex persons. This resolution proposes that this rite be included in the Enriching Our Worship series.



Resolution Number: 2015-A037
Title: Appoint an Expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention requests dioceses and parishes use the study materials on marriage provided in the last triennium by the Task Force on the Study of Marriage, namely the “Dearly Beloved” toolkit and the appended essays in their Blue Book report to this Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention directs the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies to appoint jointly an expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage to continue this work, consisting of not more than 15 people, including theologians, ethicists, pastors, liturgists, and educators, who represent the cultural and theological diversity in the Church; membership should include some of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage appointed in 2012, some from dioceses outside the United States, and young adults; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force explore further those contemporary trends and norms identified by the Task Force on the Study of Marriage in the previous triennium, specifically regarding those who choose to remain single; unmarried persons in intimate relationships; couples who cohabitate either in preparation for, or as an alternative to, marriage; couples who desire a blessing from the Church but not marriage; parenting by single or and/or unmarried persons; differing forms of family and household such as those including same-sex parenting, adoption, and racial diversity; and differences in marriage patterns between ethnic and racial groups; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force consult with (i) individuals and couples within these groups about their experience of faith and church life; and (ii) the results of diocesan and parochial study of "Dearly Beloved" toolkit; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force explore biblical, theological, moral, liturgical, cultural, and pastoral perspectives on these matters, and develop written materials about them which represent the spectrum of understanding in our Church and which include responses from theologians, ethicists, pastors, liturgists, social scientists, and educators who are not members of the expanded Task Force, and whose perspectives represent the spectrum of understandings on these matters in our Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force study and monitor, in consultation with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, the impact of same-sex marriage and rites of blessing on our Church; the continuing debate about clergy acting as agents of the state in officiating at marriages; and any other matters related to marriage by action of or referral by this Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force report and make recommendations to the 79th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force provide educational and pastoral resources for congregational use on these matters that represents the spectrum of understandings on these matters in our Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$90,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 702-704.



Resolution Number: 2015-A054
Title: Authorize Trial Use of Marriage and Blessing Rites in "Liturgical Resources I"
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention commend “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” as found in the Blue Book, Liturgy Supplemental Materials: Appendices of the Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (BBLSM), pp. 2-151 with the following revisions:

BBLSM p. 84: In The Commitment, change the rubric to read “Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the right hand of the other and says”

BBLSM p.84: After “I N., give myself to you, N.” add “, and take you to myself.”

BBLSM p. 85: At the Pronouncement, change the rubric to read “The Presider joins the right hands and says”

BBLSM p. 87: In Concerning the Service, change the second paragraph to read “At least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian, and the marriage shall conform to the laws of the state and canons of this church.”

BBLSM p. 88: Under Gathering, change the rubric to read “The couple joins the assembly.”

BBLSM p. 89: Change “In marriage according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X” to “In marriage [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X]”

BBLSM p. 89: Change “Solemnize their marriage according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X” to “are married [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X]”

BBLSM p.94: After “I N., give myself to you, N.” add “, and take you to myself.”

BBLSM p. 95: At the Pronouncement, change the rubric to read “The Presider joins the right hands of the couple and says”

BBLSM p. 95: Replace “I pronounce that they are married according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X” to “I pronounce that they are married [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X]”

BBLSM p. 100: At The Marriage, change the rubric to read “Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the right hand of the other and says” for study and use in congregations and dioceses of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention authorize for use “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” from “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” (as found in Supplemental Materials: Appendices of the Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, pp. 77-86, (as amended)),” beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2015; under the direction and with the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention authorize for trial use in accordance with Article X of the Constitution and Canon II.3.6 “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage,” and “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2,” from “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” (as found in Supplemental

Materials: Appendices of the Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, pp. 87-105) beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2015. Bishops exercising ecclesiastical authority or, where appropriate, ecclesiastical supervision, will make provision for all couples asking to be married in this Church to have access to these liturgies. Trial use is only to be available under the direction and with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop; and be it further

Resolved, That bishops may continue to provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the provision of Canon I.18.4 applies by extension to “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” namely, “It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to” preside at any rite contained herein; and be it further

Resolved, That the provisions of Canon I.19.3 regarding marriage after divorce apply equally to all the rites of “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” in accordance with guidelines established by each diocese; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality; and that no bishop, priest, deacon or lay person should be coerced or penalized in any manner, nor suffer any canonical disabilities, as a result of his or her theological objection to or support for the 78th General Convention’s action contained in this resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music continue to monitor the use of this material and report to the 79th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention direct the Secretary of General Convention, and the Custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer in consultation with the outgoing Chair of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Chairs of the Legislative Committees to whom this legislation is referred, to finalize and arrange for the publication with Church Publishing of the material (in English and Spanish) contained in “Liturgical Resources 1: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015” as approved by the 78th General Convention, no later than the first Sunday of Advent 2015, these materials to be available electronically at no cost.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 778-781.



Resolution Number: 2012-A049
Title: Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Sex Relationships
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention commend "Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing" for study and use in congregations and dioceses of The Episcopal Church, with the following revisions:

Throughout "I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing" change "same-gender" to "same-sex";

Blue Book p. 184: change "Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships" to "Resources for The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant in a same-sex relationship"

Blue Book p. 240: Add rubric after first rubric, stating: "At least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian."

Blue Book p. 240: In paragraph 2, line 1, delete "at least one of whom is baptized,"

Blue Book p. 241: In Presider's address to the assembly, delete "come what may," (paragraph 1, line 9)

Blue Book pp. 241-242: In Presider's address to the assembly, delete all of paragraph 2 ("Ahead of them...calls us all to share.")

Blue Book p. 242: In Presider's address to the assembly, change "let us pray, then," (paragraph 3, line 1) to "Therefore, in the name of Christ, let us pray"

Blue Book p. 245: After the bidding for peace in their home and love in their family, add the following bidding: "For the grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours: Lord, in your mercy (or Lord, in your goodness) Hear our prayer."

Blue Book p. 246: Change rubric that begins "After a time of silence" to the following: "The leader may add one or more of the following biddings"

Blue Book p. 247: In Commitment (both forms) line 7, change "I will honor and keep you" to "I will honor and love you"

Blue Book p. 248: In first form of blessing rings, change line 2 to "as signs of the enduring covenant"

Blue Book p. 248: In Blessing of the Couple, add rubric between first and second paragraphs: "The Presider continues with one of the following"

Blue Book p. 248: In Blessing of the Couple, add third paragraph after the "Amen": "or this / God, the holy and undivided Trinity, bless, preserve, and keep you, and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace, that you may please God in body and soul. God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior, and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen."

Blue Book p. 257: In paragraph under E. Vocation, change "1 Samuel 18" to "1 Samuel 3"; and be it further

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; and be it further
Resolved, That the provision of Canon I.18.4 applies by extension to “Theological Resources for Blessing Same-Sex Relationships,” namely, “It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to [preside at any rite of blessing defined herein]”; and be it further
Resolved, That this convention honor the theological diversity of this church in regard to matters of human sexuality, and that no bishop, priest, deacon or lay person should be coerced or penalized in any manner, nor suffer any canonical disabilities, as a result of his or her conscientious objection to or support for the 77th General Convention’s action with regard to the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships; and be it further
Resolved, That the theological resource for the blessing of a life-long covenant be further developed by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music over the 2013-2015 triennium with specific attention to further engagement with scripture and the relevant categories and sources of systematic theology (e.g., creation, sin, grace, salvation, redemption, human nature); and be it further
Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music include the work of diverse theological perspectives in the further development of the theological resource; and be it further
Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music develop an open process to review "I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing," inviting responses from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals from throughout The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, and from our ecumenical partners, and report to the 78th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), pp. 565-567.