

DIOCESE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Forty-first Annual Convention
JANUARY 30, 2010

R - 8

Title of Resolution: Response to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music Re C056

Presenter: The Very Rev. Charles Holt and The Rev. Phyllis Bartle

Date: January 26, 2010

Resolved: The Convention of the Diocese of Central Florida issues the following statement of response to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music request related to General Convention Resolution C056:

As our Prayer Book acknowledges, marriage was instituted and established by God in the beginning of creation as between a man and a woman. (See Genesis 1-2) Our Book of Common Prayer receives this definition: "Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God."(BCP 422) While human beings have been tinkering and readjusting the Lord's simple blueprint ever since the establishment of marriage to accommodate a variety of relational choices and combinations, we have always done so at odds with our Creator's will and ultimately to our own consequence and detriment.

A large movement within the secular political sphere seeks to provide a "right to marriage" for alternative relational commitments and partnerships. Even if such efforts are successful (and in some places they have been), they will not necessarily be beneficial to our society or to those who exercise the new legal "right". As Paul writes, "Not all that is lawful, is beneficial." There are many examples that can be provided where something that is legal is not necessarily beneficial, and thus to be sanctioned by the Church. For example, abortion is a legal "right" in our country, but it is not only mortally destructive to human life, but also morally, emotionally and spiritually destructive to the mothers and fathers who exercise the "right".

The Holy Scriptures commends marriage in and of itself to be honored by all people. (Hebrews 13:4). While voices within our society and the Church membership are calling for a broader definition of marriage, that does not exempt us from the responsibility to honor marriage *as God has defined it*. As Jesus taught: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot." (Matthew 5:13)

The Christian Church's responsibility is at times to speak and live counter-culturally if needed; this is what it means to be the "salt of the earth". While we recognize the theological and pastoral challenges that many of our fellow Episcopalians face in dioceses where secular legal definitions of marriage now include homosexual partnerships, we call our brothers and sisters in Christ to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world.

While the Diocese of Central Florida does not see the theological justification for broadening the definition of marriage to simply "two persons", we are very much aware of the need to offer a generous pastoral response to those who experience homosexual self-identity, orientation or attraction.

The Christian ethic of sexual purity and holiness of life calls all members regardless of sexual identity, orientation or attraction to abstain from sexual relations outside of Holy Matrimony. When members of the Church fail in that call to personal holiness the liturgical resources of the Reconciliation of the Penitent (BCP 447) provide the appropriate pastoral office. For those desiring accountability, qualified Christian counselors and support groups are extremely helpful.

Our recommendation is that we currently have, within the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, all of the needed liturgical resources at our disposal to minister to all of our members with respect to marriage and human sexuality.