



# Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

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## **GUIDELINES FOR THE BLESSING OF SAME-SEX UNIONS**

(effective Advent I - 2 December 2012)

In the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, when clergy are approached by a couple concerning Blessing of Same-Sex Union, there are several steps which must be taken.

A conference between the clergy and couple must take place. At least one of the individuals must be a baptized (confirmed) member of the Episcopal Church and the congregation.

If there are divorces from previous marriages with either person, the clergy are to ascertain the facts of the separation and the number of previous marriages, and to be assured that all legal and financial obligations to the previous spouse(s) and children are being met.

The Service of Blessing may take place in the Church, on Church grounds, within homes or others appropriate places.

The Service of Blessing is not designed to imitate a Wedding and should not be approached within structure and style of that worship. This should be a joyous time and celebration for those seeking the Blessing.

The State of Alabama and the State of Florida do not recognize same-sex marriages.

All Same-Sex Blessings will be from the Liturgical Rite "*Liturgical Resources I*" passed by the 77<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church entitled "*I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing: Resources for The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant in a same-sex relationship*".

Finally, all Services for the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions are to be recorded in the Service Register. When finalized, written notice is to be given to the Bishop, by returning the Certification of Blessing, provided on the bottom of the Bishop's letter of approval.