

Guidelines for use of authorized liturgy for blessing of same-sex relationships

**Episcopal Diocese of Michigan
The Rt. Rev'd Wendell N. Gibbs, Jr., Bishop**

As I stated in my address to our Annual Convention in October, 2012:

“At the 77th General Convention meeting in Indianapolis, a resolution was passed by both houses of Convention that authorized for provisional use a liturgy designed to be used to witness and bless the lifelong covenantal relationship between persons of the same-sex under the direction and with the permission of the bishop of the diocese. Further, the resolution upholds the canonical provisions which allow discretion for the members of the clergy who may decline to preside at any such rite of blessing. The resolution also calls for the honoring of the theological diversity of this church with regard to matters of human sexuality such 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 General Conventions action with regard to the blessing of same-sex relationships.’”

Therefore, I hereby grant permission for use of the liturgy entitled “I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing” for provisional use throughout this next triennium, beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2012. It is my expectation that the following guidelines will be adhered to throughout that time period:

- For a priest to make use of this liturgy the priest must notify me of his or her intention to use the liturgy and the priest must be in conversation with their Vestry or Bishops Committee and obtain their support for its use in the congregation. If the Vestry or Bishops Committee is not supportive for the use of this liturgy in that congregation, the cleric may seek an alternative location (preferably another Episcopal Church) where he/she may be encouraged to use the “blessings” liturgy.
- If changes from what is printed are desired in the liturgy, permission must be obtained from me in writing prior to implementation of any change.
- Following the use of this liturgy, the cleric is expected to submit to me an evaluation citing places where the liturgy may need further revision or refinement so that this information can be collected and forwarded to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

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- All relationships blessed by the church are to be grounded in spiritual reflection and holy discernment; clergy should engage couples in a period of counseling prior to the actual blessing service.
- Because the State of Michigan currently carries a Constitutional amendment defining marriage that does not include same-sex relationships, the use of “I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing” is not to be celebrated as a wedding and care should be taken to maintain the integrity of the two different services. Thus, the use of words such as “marriage” or “wedding” when announcing or referring to services of blessing are inappropriate and not to be used.
- Finally, I will not tolerate any dishonoring of opposing viewpoints from either side of the matter. No one and no congregation will be forced to use this liturgy; no one and no congregation will be forced to perform the blessing of a same-sex relationship. If any harassment is experienced I ask that you bring it to my attention immediately.