

## From the Bishop

At our [convention in November 2009](#), I announced my intention to permit the blessing of same-gender unions in the Diocese of Southern Ohio, beginning in Easter of 2010. At that time, I named a task force of clergy and laity whom I asked to assist me in working out the [procedures and requirements](#) related to this policy. Here, once again, are the members of the task force: The Rev. Douglas Argue, The Rev. Trevor Babb, The Rev. William Carroll, Joe Dehner, Esq., The Rev. Pam Elwell, The Rev. George Hill, Nanci Koepke, The Rev. Eileen O'Reilly, Dr. Gail Payne, Dr. Don Reed, Dr. Marti Rideout, A. J Stack, and Lisa Wharton, Esq.

As I said at the time, this was not a collection of people who were necessarily eager to see Southern Ohio move in the direction of same-gender unions. Some were; some weren't. Once gathered, however, they dug into the hard questions with great courage and mutual respect.

This group has gone far beyond my initial request in stating the [theological convictions](#) that underlie the policy, in developing [a rite of blessing for trial use](#), and in providing [web and print resources](#) for congregational and individual study. I am extremely grateful for their work – not only for its outcome, which will contribute significantly to the Episcopal Church's reflection on same-gender unions, but also for the charity, honesty and devotion to the Gospel that was so beautifully modeled in their conversations with one another.

The Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal  
Bishop, Diocese of Southern Ohio

# Theological Reflection

## Sacred Unions: What we believe we are doing when we bless them

What do we think the Church is doing when it blesses same gender unions? And how do such unions relate to Christian marriage as described in the Book of Common Prayer? As we attempt to answer these questions, our hope is that a spirit of "mutual forbearance" (Eph 4:1-3) and respect for conscientious disagreement will continue to prevail among us, for the sake of our common witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A holy or sacred union is a godly, life-long covenant of two persons to be faithful to one another in mutual care and affection, becoming one with each other, as a means of sanctification and for the service of God. Since same-gender marriage has no legal status in Ohio and since neither the Book of Common Prayer nor the Canons have yet been altered to authorize use of the marriage liturgy for same-gender couples, we will be exploring the use of a different liturgy to bless same-gender unions and a different term, "sacred union," to include any union, whether same-gender or opposite-gender, that exhibits the characteristics listed above. Theological reflection on the blessing of same-gender unions may help us more deeply ground our understanding of all sacred unions in Christian faith and discipleship. We believe that the (a) goals, (b) vows, and (c) sacramental character of all sacred unions are the same as, or at least very similar to, Christian marriage as defined in the Prayer Book. To borrow a phrase from Bishop Breidenthal, all such unions involve the "sanctification of nearness." They are a means of grace and promote growth in holiness.

### (a) The Goals Defining Sacred Unions

In the Book of Common Prayer, three goals (or ends) are given for Christian marriage. They are: (1) "mutual joy"; (2) "the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity"; and (3) "when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord" (BCP, p. 423). The first reflects the divine joy among the three persons of the Trinity, who give themselves to each other for all eternity in a perfect communion of mutual love among equals. Human beings are never so fully one as the Trinity, yet the triune being of the one God is the creative source of human tendencies toward friendship, community, and ecstatic joy in the near presence of the beloved. The second goal of marriage reminds us of God's consistent fidelity to God's covenants—and, above all, of the mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32). Sacred unions point us to the humble agape-love that Jesus showed for all people, which Paul uses as a model for life in Christian community (Philippians 2:1-18). Pure love in which each person seeks the good of the other in an unqualified manner, sets the standard for any Christian community, including that which exists within a sacred union. The fact that we fall short of it in no way detracts from this standard. As we shall see, this goal is central to the vows the partners make. The third goal of marriage shows that the purpose of a sacred union extends beyond the couple. Traditionally, this is expressed in terms of the procreation and Christian nurture of children. This third goal is qualified by the phrase "when it is God's will," because not all unions involve children, whether through birth or adoption. Where a couple has children, their union must open up to welcome them and form them in the knowledge and love of the Lord, in imitation of Christ's own hospitality and call to discipleship. At the same time, all sacred unions, with or without children, must have a purpose beyond themselves. This is reflected in the prayers: "Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others." (BCP, p. 429) Like Jesus himself, Christians live in community not purely for our own sake but also for our neighbor's. Sacred unions strengthen us to love and serve the Lord.

### (b) The Vows Defining Sacred Unions

In the Prayer Book, the promises and vows that frame Christian marriage help define the sort of relationship the Church is blessing. The form and content of the vows should be fundamentally the same for all sacred unions. Each person promises "to take" the other as his or her partner (in the Prayer Book, the traditional, gendered terms, husband and wife, are used) "to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death" (BCP, p. 427). Similar definitions of the relationship are found in the declaration of consent earlier in the liturgy (BCP, p. 424), which highlights the voluntary character of the union. The declaration adds

"forsaking all others" and the notion of being "faithful." Hence, exclusive fidelity to a single partner is presupposed and put into effect by the promises.

Three things should be noted about the promises and vows themselves. First, they are lifelong in intent. The Church now recognizes the tragic reality of divorce and makes pastoral provision for remarriage under certain circumstances, but the couple ought to work to preserve and nurture their union, so that it may endure for a lifetime. In some cases, such as abandonment, adultery, or abuse (physical, emotional, or psychological), divorce may be the best option. Second, three clauses, "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health," express an unconditional commitment to the partner, regardless of circumstance. No hedging of bets is permitted. As already noted, this is related to the second goal of marriage, "the help and comfort given to one another in prosperity and adversity." Third, the heart of the vows is "to love and to cherish." "Love" means that Christ sets the standard. Sacred unions involve a calling to love our partners as Christ loves the Church. Neither passion nor romance, important as these are, is sufficient to sustain us in this vocation over time. Friendship and agape-love of the partner are both necessary. Sacred unions, as Christian communities, are schools of charity, in which we encounter difference and practice forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation. "Cherish" indicates that sacred unions are close and intimate relationships, unions "in heart, body, and mind" (BCP, p. 423) in which each one of us places a preeminent value on the particularities and person of our partner. An additional consideration to note is that these vows are witnessed, not only by God but by the community. No provision is made to write one's own vows. This reflects the fact that one is entering into a publicly accountable institution and divinely-given sacrament, not of one's own making. This is not to denigrate the relationships of those couples, same-gender and opposite-gender, who may decline for various reasons to enter into publicly accountable unions. Their experience and presence among us does raise important and complex issues for Christian ethics and pastoral care, to which the Church must also respond, but since they are not seeking the Church's blessing, these issues do not concern us here.

### **(c) The Sacramental Character of Sacred Unions**

The last remaining task is to say something about the sacramental character of sacred unions. In the Prayer Book, the Church is said to celebrate, witness, and bless a marriage but never to create it (BCP, p. 423, where "celebration and blessing" is used in the title and "witness and bless" in the first full paragraph after the rubrics). The union of the couple "in heart, body, and mind" is something they enact in all the details of their life together before God. In fact, this reality precedes the liturgy, and it continues to be forged afterwards. Nevertheless, the act of celebrating, witnessing, and blessing does create a change, even for couples who have been together for some time. Within the liturgy itself, it is the couple's exchange of vows that effects the union. The blessing comes later in the rite (BCP, p. 430), after the couple has already been pronounced husband and wife and the community has prayed (BCP, p. 428-429). The change in question is fundamentally one of mutual, unqualified commitment, publicly offered and witnessed, in the context of communal celebration and blessing. As with other sacraments, the grace conveyed is related to the form of the signs used to signify that grace. As the liturgy unfolds, the couple's life together comes to embody the faithful, mutual, loving union of Christ and the Church. If same-gender unions are defined by substantially similar goals and vows and blessed in the context of a similar liturgy, then the sacramental reality is the same, or at least very similar and in no sense inferior. All the sacraments are ways that God continues to make the incarnate Christ visible, tangible, and effective throughout history and in the lives of human beings. The sacraments draw us ever deeper into the mystery of Jesus in his living, dying, and rising for the life of the world. The Holy Spirit, who fills them with their life-giving power, is always one and the same.

*Note: It should be acknowledged that there is considerable discussion about whether to speak of same-gender or same-sex unions. We have opted for the former term because we think it is less distracting, though perhaps less accurate.*

# **Policies and Procedures**

## **for the Blessing of Same-Gender Unions in the Diocese of Southern Ohio**

1. The blessing of a Same-Gender Union (hereafter referred to as a “union”) requires written permission of the Bishop (or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in the absence of the Ordinary), hereafter together referred to as the “Bishop”).
  - (a) Permission must be sought in writing by a priest canonically resident in the Diocese of Southern Ohio, or licensed to officiate in the Diocese of Southern Ohio.
  - (b) Request for permission must be delivered to the Diocesan office for the Bishop’s attention no later than sixty (60) days prior to the proposed date for a blessing.
2. For every proposed blessing, at least one of the two persons requesting the blessing must be a member in good standing of The Episcopal Church resident within the Diocese.
3. Prior to a priest’s officiating at the blessing, the couple must receive adequate counseling as determined by the priest. (Priests are encouraged to take advantage of the educational resources available on the Diocesan Website.)
4. Any priest intending to bless a union should inform the congregation in which the blessing will be recorded.
5. The priest-in-charge retains the right and responsibility to determine whether any union shall be blessed on church property or under the auspices of the congregation.
6. Blessings of unions shall be recorded in the congregation in which, or under whose auspices, the blessing takes place, and no blessing shall be performed without such record.
7. When presented with a union that is imperiled, a priest must act first to protect and promote the physical and emotional safety of the couple, and then to promote reconciliation.
8. Any member of this Church who seeks the dissolution of a union, or who seeks permission to enter into a subsequent union, may apply to the Bishop for a judgment. Such judgment may be a recognition of the nullity, or of the termination of the union; *Provided*, that no such judgment shall be construed as affecting in any way the legitimacy of children or the civil validity of the former relationship. Every judgment made under this provision shall be in writing and made a matter of permanent record in the archives of the diocese.
9. No priest of this Diocese shall bless the union of any person, except as hereinafter provided:
  - (a) The priest shall be satisfied by appropriate evidence that any prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction, and that the same is true for any union that was evidenced by a formal civil proceeding.
  - (b) The priest shall have instructed the parties that continuing concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse or partner, and of any children of the prior marriage or union;
  - (c) The priest shall consult with and obtain the consent of the Bishop to officiate prior to, and shall report to the Bishop, the blessing; and
  - (d) If the proposed blessing is to be given in a jurisdiction other than the one in which the consent has been given, the consent shall be affirmed by the Bishop of that jurisdiction.
10. It shall be within the discretion of any priest to decline to bless any union.

# The Blessing of a Sacred Union

A Form Provided for Trial Use in the Diocese of Southern Ohio  
from Easter, 2010

*The Presider faces the people and the two persons to be joined in sacred union, who stand before him/her.*

Presider

Dear people of God: We have come together in the presence of God to acknowledge and bless the union of *N.N and N.N.*, who seek to make public profession of their offering of themselves to each other in heart, body and mind, for their mutual joy and comfort, and for their growth together in Christ. The life-long covenant of two persons in faithful union is to be honored as a means of sanctification, a witness to God's love, and a shared commitment to service in God's Name. Therefore it should be entered into deliberately, freely, and with full knowledge of the solemn obligations it entails.

## THE DECLARATION OF CONSENT

*The Presider addresses the two persons in turn*

*N*, will you join your life with *N*, sharing your love and life with *N*, your wholeness and your brokenness, your joys and your sorrows, your health and your sickness, your riches and your poverty, your success and your failure, and be faithful to him/her so long as you both shall live?

*Each answers*

I will.

*The Presider then addresses the congregation, saying*

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to honor and uphold this union?

*People*      **We will.**

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

*Presider*      The Lord be with you.

*People*      **And also with you.**

*Presider*      Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, You have created us in your image and called us to love you and one another. Hear our prayers for *N and N*, who now celebrate before you their covenant of sacred union and ask for your blessing. Give them grace to keep the promises and vows they make here today, that their life together may be a witness to your love;

through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.

People **Amen.**

*One or more Readings from Holy Scripture precede the exchange of vows. The following passages are suggested. If there is to be a Communion, a Reading from the Gospel is always included.*

Ruth 1: 6-17

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

Song of Songs 2: 10-13, 8: 6-7

Zephaniah 3: 14-20

Romans 12: 9-18; 21

1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13

2 Corinthians 5: 17-20

Colossians 3: 12-16a.

*Between the readings a psalm, hymn or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate psalms are 65, 67, 85:1-3 (4-6) 7-13, 111, 127, 133, 149.*

*When a passage from the Gospel is to be read, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says*

People **The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_  
Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

John 15:9-12

John 2:1-11

Matthew 5:14-16

Matthew 7:24-27

Mark 12: 38-34

Luke 6:32-38

Luke 10:21-2

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

People **The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

*A Homily or other response to the Readings may follow.*

## **THE EXCHANGE OF VOWS**

*The couple stand facing one another.*

*One says to the other (taking the other's hand)*

N, I join my life with yours,  
Faithfully and without reservation,  
from this day forward.  
I will love and cherish you  
in prosperity and in hardship,  
in health and in sickness,  
in joy and in sorrow,  
until we are parted by death.  
This is my solemn vow.

*Then they loose hands, and the other, taking the first one's hand, says*

*N*, I join my life with yours,  
Faithfully and without reservation,  
from this day forward.  
I will love and cherish you  
in prosperity and in hardship,  
in health and in sickness,  
in joy and in sorrow,  
until we are parted by death.  
This is my solemn vow.

*They loose their hands.*

*The Presider may ask God's blessing on a ring or rings as follows:*

Bless, O Lord, these rings to be signs of the vows by which these two persons have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*People*      **Amen.**

*Each places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's hand, saying*

*N*, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am and all that I have I honor you; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*or* in the Name of God).

**Presider:**      In exchanging vows of love, support and fidelity,  
                      *N and N* are now joined in sacred union.  
                      May the grace of God be with them for ever.

**People**      **Amen.**

## THE PRAYERS

*All standing, the Presider says.*

*Presider*      Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

Our Father, who are in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
And deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

*If communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.*

*The prayers may be led by the Presider, a deacon, one of the sponsors, or a family member chosen by the couple. At the end of each petition all respond: Hear our prayer.*

Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation and giver of grace: Look with favor on the world you have made, and for which your son Jesus gave his life; and especially on these two persons whose covenant you bless. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader*

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow and a companion in joy. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their lives. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader*

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt and joy conquer despair. God, of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader*

Bless them according to your will, with the gift and heritage of children and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader*

Bless N. [and N.], the *child/children* of N. and N., that this household may be a place of nurture and strength for *them*. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**



*Leader*

Grant that we who have witnessed these vows may find our lives strengthened and our loyalties confirmed. God of love,

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity now and for ever.

*People*     **Hear our prayer.**

*The Presider continues*

*Presider:*     Bless the union of *N.* and *N.*;  
                  walk with them in joy and in sorrow,  
                  sustain them in prosperity and in adversity,  
                  guide them in light and in darkness,  
                  and fill them with the fullness of your love.

*People*     **Amen.**

## **THE BLESSING OF THE UNION**

*The blessing is pronounced by the Presider. The couple may stand facing the Presider or may kneel. The Presider may place his/her hands on the heads of the couple or hold their joined hands.*

Most gracious God, you have put into the hearts of your people a yearning for community with you and one another. You call us into covenant and endow us with heart and will that we may keep faith with you and with one another. Pour out your blessing upon *N.* and *N.* Deepen their joy, guide and console them in difficult times; sustain them in the knowledge of your loving care; and bring them in the end to know you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

*People*     **Amen.**

May the God of peace bless, preserve, and keep you; may God be gracious to you, guide you in truth and peace, and make you strong in love and faith; so that you may grow together in this life, and the love that you share be taken up beyond death itself, to dwell in God's eternal glory.

*People*     **Amen.**

## **THE PEACE**

*Presider*     The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People*     **And also with you.**

+ *The couple greet each other and the congregation.*

+ *When Communion is not to follow, the congregation withdraws. A hymn, psalm or anthem may be sung; or instrumental music may be played.*

## **At the Eucharist**

*The Liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.*

*Preface*

Because in the holy covenant of love between two people  
you have given us an image of the heavenly Jerusalem  
where we will at last be united  
with your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;  
who loves us and gave himself for us  
to make the whole creation new.  
Therefore we praise you, joining our voices...

*At the Communion, it is appropriate that the newly united couple receive the Communion first, after the ministers.*

*In place of the usual postcommunion prayer, the following is said.*

*Presider*     O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious:  
                  We give you thanks for binding us together  
                  in these holy mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
                  Grant that by your Holy Spirit, *N.* and *N.*, now joined in sacred union,  
                  may become one in heart and soul,  
                  live in fidelity and peace,  
                  and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you:  
                  for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*People*        **Amen.**

*As the congregation withdraws, a hymn, psalm or anthem may be sung; or instrumental music may be played.*

## Concerning the Service

A priest or a bishop shall preside. When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons.

In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of N.N.), the full names of the persons to be blessed are declared. Subsequently, only their Christian names are used.

*Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Diocese of Washington and the Diocese of Vermont from whom portions of this liturgy are taken.*

# Educational resources

## WEBSITE RESOURCES

[www.integrityusa.org](http://www.integrityusa.org)

This mission statement appears at the top of the *Integrity* website: *Since 1974 Integrity has been a faithful witness of God's inclusive love to the Episcopal Church and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. We are working for the full inclusion of all the baptized in all the sacraments.*

[www.claimingtheblessing.org/publications.html](http://www.claimingtheblessing.org/publications.html)

*Claiming the Blessing* [CTB] is an unincorporated coalition of Episcopal organizations and individuals advocating for full inclusion of all the baptized in all sacraments of the church--including the blessing of same-sex relationships and equal access to all orders of ministry by qualified gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered candidates.

[www.dioceseofvermont.org](http://www.dioceseofvermont.org)

A Pastoral Letter on Marriage Equality by the Rt. Rev. Thomas C. Ely, Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont.

Task Force on the Blessing of Persons Living in Same-Gender Relationships: Report (June 8, 2004)

Liturgies for Trial Use (Part IV of the Task Force Report)

Intimate Human Relationships: Resources for Conversation in the Congregations and Deaneries of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont (Anne Clarke Brown, ed., June 2000, revised & updated June 2004.)

[www.province1.org](http://www.province1.org)

Pastoral Resources for Province One Episcopal Clergy Ministering to Same-Gender Couples

[www.vancouver.anglican](http://www.vancouver.anglican)

The Anglican Diocese of New Westminster in Canada has developed a resource at [www.samesexblessings.info](http://www.samesexblessings.info).

## PRINT RESOURCES

### **Sacred Unions: A New Guide to Lifelong Commitment**

Author: The Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal, Bishop, Diocese of Southern Ohio

Publisher: Cowley Publications

ISBN-10:1561012491

ISBN-13:978-1561012497

A reflection of faith addressed to all lovers engaged in lifelong commitment, be they straight or gay. Breidenthal asserts that lifelong unions have great value and are a viable option for all individuals, regardless of their background and nature. Chapters address the qualities innate to any enduring relationship of love, including the act of self-giving, the discipline of fidelity, and the ability to adapt and cooperate when confronted with the demands of being parents. Of especial note are the insights into how to cope when love turns painful, and couples hurt one another, intentionally or unintentionally. A sentimental, devoted, and ultimately uplifting celebration of the joys, virtues, and sacrifices of true love. (Midwest Book Review)

### **Christian Households: The Sanctification of Nearness**

Author: The Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal, Bishop, Diocese of Southern Ohio

Publisher: Wipf & Stock Publishers

ISBN-10:1592448860

ISBN-13: 9781592448869

In the church today we find many different kinds of households: married couples with and without children, single parents, same-sex couples, monastic communities, people living alone. In constructing a theology of the Christian household Breidenthal begins with New Testament texts on the family and goes on to develop criteria by which we can tell the difference between households that are holy, households that fall short of holiness, and households whose basic premises rule out any possibility of holiness.

### **This Far By Grace: A Bishop's Journey Through Questions of Homosexuality**

Author: The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander, Bishop, Diocese of Atlanta

Publisher: Cowley Publications

ISBN-10: 1561012246

ISBN-13: 978-1561012244

In this thoughtful and timely book, Bishop Alexander explores his journey through the theological, scriptural, and pastoral aspects of the questions surrounding homosexuality and the Christian faith. Writing in the weeks after the General Convention of the Episcopal Church approved the appointment of the church's first openly gay bishop, Bishop Alexander offers a personal view of his changing outlook – from exclusion to acceptance – on this important issue. He also offers thought-provoking perspectives on scripture and tradition. (Cowley Publications)

### **Our Selves, Our Souls and Bodies: Sexuality and the Household of God**

Author: Charles Hefling

Publisher: Cowley Publications

ISBN-10:1561011223

ISBN-13:978-1561011223

A collection of essays, in the forms of narrative, argument, first-person accounts, and theological reasoning, by some two dozen leading figures in the Episcopal Church and other Anglicans, many of them noted theologians. Their common question: How should the church view sexuality, particularly homosexuality? All the contributors end up in 'gay-friendly' places - but what makes the book fascinating is the varied paths they take to those destinations and the integrity with which they find their way there. (*The Advocate*)

### **Same-Sex Unions: Stories and Rites**

Author: The Rt. Rev. Paul Victor Marshall

Publisher: Church Publishing Inc.

ISBN-10:0898694175

ISBN-13: 978-0898694178

*Same-Sex Unions* is a liturgical and pastoral exploration of what is already happening at places in the church today. Part one offers three biographical vignettes: a female couple, a male couple, and a widowed spouse from a same-sex couple. Part two contains complete texts of several of the rites, including the rite currently authorized for use in the Diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada, together with liturgical analysis and reference to secondary literature. (Church Publishing Incorporated)

### **Reasonable and Holy: Engaging Same-Sexuality**

Author: Tobias Stanislas Haller

Publisher: Seabury Books

ISBN-10: 1596271108            ISBN-13: 978-1596271104

*Reasonable and Holy* addresses the conflict over homosexuality within the Anglican tradition, demonstrating that the church is able to provide for and support faithful and loving relationships between persons of the same sex, not as a departure from that tradition, but as a reasonable extension of it. It offers a carefully argued, but accessible means of engagement with Scripture, the Jewish and Christian traditions, and the use of reason in dealing with the experience and lives of fellow-Christians. (Seabury)

### **Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe**

Author: John Boswell

Publisher: Vintage; First Thus edition

ISBN-10: 0679751645            ISBN-13: 978-0679751649

Diligently researched and documented, this immensely scholarly work covers everything from the "paired" saints of Perpetua and Felicitas and Serge and Bacchus to lesbian transvestites in Albania. Examining evidence that the early church celebrated a same-sex nuptial liturgy, Boswell compares both Christian same-sex unions to Christian heterosexual unions and non-Christian same-sex unions to non-Christian heterosexual unions. Appendixes contain, among other things, translations and transcriptions of cited documents. Whether or not minds are changed on the matter will probably fall along sectarian lines, according to current attitudes on homosexuality. However, the work will provoke dialog. (Lee Arnold, Historical Society of Pennsylvania)

### **Gay Unions – In Light of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason**

Author: Gray Temple

Publisher: Church Publishing

ISBN 10: 0898694574            ISBN 13: 978-0898694574

Drawing on the Anglican trilateral- authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason, Temple's approach is scholarly and pastoral as he dares to take the Bible seriously---not literally! He unpacks the topic of scriptural authority and invites people on both sides of this debate to embrace not merely a change of mind but a change of heart and mind based on honesty and integrity in our dealing with this issue and how we decide what is right and wrong. (J. Wesley Smith, Macon GA)

### **Marriage: A History—From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage**

Author: Stephanie Coontz

Publisher: Viking

ISBN 10: 014303667X            ISBN 13: 978-0143036678

This is a good source on the history of marriage customs through centuries, showing that marriage is an evolved institution that has changed in response to the social pressures and needs of the times. (Robert Moore, Chicago)

## **Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Families**

Editor: Peggy Gillespie

Publisher: University of Massachusetts Press

ISBN-10: 1558491619

ISBN-13: 978-1558491618

This collection of informal family portraits and interviews with LGBT parents and their children grew out of a photo exhibit created by photographer Kaeser. Myriad family configurations are presented: gay and lesbian couples, divorced lesbians coparenting, single parents, transgendered parents, and stepparents and their children. From text accompanying the photographs, we learn who these people consider family and why as they speak about their feelings and experiences as part of an LGBT family. The interviews reveal many of the same joys and struggles as found in other families in addition to the challenges of being an LGBT family in a predominantly heterosexual world. Most enlightening are the children's words; some tell of teasing and hostility directed toward them because of their family, while others simply state that they have two moms or two dads and a family is the people who love you. (Debra Moore, Loyola Marymount Univ. Lib., Los Angeles)

### **Other Resources:**

Eugene Rogers, *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way Into the Triune God* (Blackwell, 1999); Mark Jordan, *Blessing Same-Sex Unions: The Perils of Queer Romance and the Confusions of Christian Marriage* (University of Chicago, 2005).