

Informal Narrative of Parts of the 158th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese
of California Relating to the Commission on Marriage and Blessing
Joseph Lane, Co-chair, CMB
October 20, 2007

So, here's the story on the blessings resolution...

But first, know that our convention passed a resolution brought forth by St. John's, SF (John Kirkley's congregation) distancing our Diocese from B033 and the House of Bishops statement. Kitty Lehman spoke to it, saying that the national canons have a nondiscrimination clause and, that as she sees it, this resolution makes the Diocese of CA more compliant with the national Canons than General Convention! Prior to that, Chad Smith, in his report from Standing Committee, spoke of SC's having passed a motion saying SC would not vote against consent to any office based on sexual orientation.

Oh, and we had about a dozen new people sign up at our table who would like to work with CMB. I know most of them — terrific people. About two dozen participated in all or part of our lunchtime breakout group on marriage and blessing. We spent most of the time talking not about rites but about the work ahead — resources for clergy, couples, and congregations, as well church and state, plus an idea we haven't talked about much yet — pastoral resources to help couples going through tough times, break-up, or divorce — sad realities in life and in our church.

Blessings – Okay, so, in his address at the beginning of convention, Bishop Marc said, “I will continue to represent the Diocese in the ongoing Church and Communion-wide conversations on the full inclusion of LGBT people, and in the global flourishing promoted by the MDG's. In this connection, let me say that I welcome the resolution on marriage and blessing being offered at this Convention. I think the resolution properly augments my pastoral goal of caring alike for all the people of the Diocese, not reinforcing damaging distinctions. I also think, at the same time, that the resolution writers have honored the spirit of the Windsor Report and subsequent requests from the Primates of the Communion to not develop ‘public rites’.”

(Bishop Marc has, in other venues, explained his understanding of the words ‘authorized rites’ and ‘public’ as having a technical meaning in ecclesiastical contexts. He was not at all suggesting that we do blessings, to use Bill Swing's phrase, under the radar. Bishop Marc understands ‘authorized’ and ‘public’ as relating to rites approved by General Convention for inclusion in *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Book of Occasional Services*, or *Enriching Our Worship (Supplemental Liturgical Texts)*, and would say those kinds of rites have not yet been developed and approved for same-gender unions. For example, in his October 2006 letter to the clergy, Bishop Marc wrote: “The blessings of same sex couples in our churches are celebrations of Christian love and vocation, and deserve the same expressions of joy and excitement that others enjoy. So, for example, it is entirely appropriate that invitations be sent and newspaper announcements be made.”)

Lyn and I spoke to the resolution in our CMB report late in the morning (available at <http://marriageandblessing.org>), so left it to others to speak up in the debate late this afternoon. Joe McDonough, a parishioner of mine at Good Shepherd, Belmont, who serves on CMB, spoke to it from his context as a straight man — identifying himself as not GLBT but as an ‘H’ (for ‘heterosexual’; Joe had also spoken to the St. John's resolution). Then George Edsell, a conservative older British man who is a parishioner at St. Matthew's, San Mateo, where I served as curate and assistant rector, spoke at length against the CMB resolution in very familiar terms relating to the rending of the fabric of the Anglican Communion, etc. Interestingly, George had

insisted earlier in the day that I read through his speech, asking me to tell him if any parts were offensive in any way, because if there were offences, he would delete them. George began his speech by saying he knows exactly how Daniel felt going into the lion's den, then spoke for longer than the allowed time, at one point evidently not hearing Bishop Marc's gentle interruption informing him of that fact and asking him to end. When George finished, Bishop Marc responded in reference to George's 'Daniel' comment by making it clear that such treatment would certainly come from him, as bishop, or from others in the diocese. (George's running his speech by me previous to delivering it says a lot about the respect inherent in our own relationship.) Ironically, as you'll see below, I had quoted from "Annie Get Your Gun" and George, in turn, quoted "Fiddler on the Roof." That synchronicity was priceless! (Actually, I misspoke and said "Oklahoma" but you get the point.)

No surprises in the typical DofCA vote: heavy ayes with a very few vociferous nays.