

Resolution One: Commission on Marriage and Blessing

RESOLVED, that this 156th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California recommend that the Bishop establish a Commission on Marriage and Blessing to continue the work of the Bishop's Task Force on Marriage and Blessing appointed at the 155th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California, and to present its final report to the 161st Convention of this Diocese, after which the Commission shall cease to exist.

Explanation:

In addition to the issues relating specifically to a rite or rites for blessing same-gender unions, the Bishop's Task Force on Marriage and Blessing (2004/2005) has raised and only begun to work with other issues that call for further reflection. The task force quickly learned its work was not only about the wedding/liturgical blessing but about the marriage/union that follows the ceremony—the couple's actually living together in the context of a community of faith, along with catechesis and formation, nurturing, and mentoring all covenanted, loving, committed relationships.

We have tabled, for now, questions about whether clergy should act as agents of the state. The commission might well consider such concerns in the coming years.

The five-year life of the commission is designed to respond to actions at the next two General Conventions (2006 & 2009). A sunset clause offers hope that the Commission will respond positively to a time certain deadline, and continuation of the new Commission after Diocesan Convention in 2010 would require further action by the Bishop, diocesan council, or diocesan convention.

October 2005

Resolution Two: Resources for Catechesis with Couples and Communities of Faith

RESOLVED, that this 156th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California direct the Commission on Marriage and Blessing to develop, for distribution at the 158th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California, resources relating to the ethics and pastoral theology of lifelong committed relationships in order to:

- a. foster the discernment and articulation of the ways in which marriages and same-gender unions manifest and strengthen Christian discipleship by encouraging a better understanding of the Christian vocation to lifelong union as grounded in the Baptismal Covenant, and thereby
- b. help to offset the causes and influences that contribute to the fragile state of marriage and other lifelong unions in our current culture, and
- c. help local congregations understand their proper role in supporting and nurturing such relationships, and
- d. prepare couples seeking marriage or other rites of blessing, and support them in their continuing life together.

Explanation:

The clergy are required to prepare couples when they seek rites of blessing. Furthermore, couples require support in their continuing life together. And the faith community must learn its role in nurturing such relationships.

(The 158th Convention of the Diocese of California will be in 2007.)

October 2005

Resolution Three: The Liturgical Covenanting, Blessing, and Sending Forth of Couples in Committed Same-Sex Relationships

RESOLVED, that this 156th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California, building on the Bishop's long-standing practice permitting the blessing of same-gender unions in this Diocese, direct the Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Commission on Marriage and Blessing to jointly prepare for consideration by the 158th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California a rite or rites which formalize the blessing of same-gender unions in the Diocese of California, together with a policy for the use of said rite or rites.

Explanation:

It is anticipated that the rite or rites will reflect the context of a couple and a community of faith, for the liturgical covenanting, blessing, and sending forth of same-gender couples in committed relationships "characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection, and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God" [Resolution D039 of the 73rd General Convention], together with a policy for the use of said rite or rites.

(The 158th Convention of the Diocese of California will be in 2007.)

October 2005